16
健速
Takehaya
不思議

六畳間の
侵略者!? 16
いざ、地底世界へ！

Legendary Weapon System series02 “Combat dress” Accessory “Assault Red”

Personal High Mobility Hard-point Base Assault Weapon Set “Assault Red”

Armament :
Rapid Beam Rifle
Recoilless Pile Driver
Double Anti-Materiel Gun
Multiple Launch Missile System

High Maneuver Warfare Module Customize For Kalama & Kolama “O-hime”

Crew : 4
Length: 20.2m
Height: 5.8m
weight: 25.5t

Armament :
Amplified Elemental Beam Cannon
Elemental Torpedo
Grapple Arm
Elemental Field Generator

Legendary Weapon System series01-A “Garb of lord”

Autonomous Tactical Support Weapon System
Assault Equipment(Type-A)

Armament:
Variable Property Laser Cannon
High Convergence Beam Cannon
Active Distortion Field Generator

新たなる力が地底の闇を切り裂く——

「お邪魔していいだろうか？」
彼女は何故か上半身だけを
地下から六畳間に出した状態で、
孝太郎を見つめていた。

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To the Underground World

Part 1

Sunday, July 4

To the five Sun Rangers, the Forthorthe weapons they had been loaned were complete mysteries. While they had only been issued with non-lethal weapons to keep the conflict from growing larger, they were still far more excellent than any of the weapons on Earth. The five could not do anything but be amazed.

“What the heck is this…? I’ve never seen a taser gun that fires bullets.”

“Hayato-niichan, this looks like a bazooka, but is it seriously non-lethal?”

“Kenichi, wouldn’t this suit you? Supposedly it’s a shock sword.”

“You’re right. Daisaku, could you spar with me a little?”

“Yeah, sure. Let’s confirm all of their uses.”

While they had been shocked at first, they couldn’t stay surprised with a battle so close. In preparation for the the real battle, they began some light sparring battles.

“How is it Daisaku?”

“Hmm, it seems like there’s a bit of delay between a hit and when the zap comes.”

“I see. So I need to correspond faster than with the usual blade…”

A bang rang out.

“…A direct hit. Well done, Hayato-niichan.”

“What an unpleasant gun. It hits exactly where I am.”

“So that’s why you hit slightly above the mark.”

“It looks like I won’t need to make any corrections with this.”

The practice continued for a while, and just as the practice was about to end.

“Oh?”

Megumi spotted several small silhouettes behind some drums. These silhouettes belonged to the children of the underground people. The Sun Rangers were currently in the conservative faction’s stronghold, and these were their children.

“What are you doing here? We are practicing fighting here, so it’s dangerous.”

“…Are you heroes of justice?”

One of the children behind the drums timidly asked Megumi. They had overheard the adults speaking about transforming heroes and came to take a look.

“I always wish to be one.”

“…Are you going to defeat the underground people?”

That was what the children worried about the most. Still unaware of how the world worked, the last thing the children wanted was to become the enemy of heroes of justice.

“No, that’s not it. It doesn’t matter if you’re surface people or underground people. We are only going to stop those that would hurt others.”

“Then… you’re our allies?”

“Are you bullying someone?”

“No, we wouldn’t do that. We all get along!”

“With the surface people too?”

“Yeah! We went together to a festival the day before yesterday!”

“I see. Then we are your allies.”

As Megumi smiled, the children let out sighs of relief. From there, children came out from behind the drums, one after another. In total there were seven of them, and they looked at the Sun Rangers with sparkling eyes.

“You transform right!?”

“Yes, we do.”

“I want to see it!”

“Hmm, let’s go ask the others… Everyone, could you come over!”

“Yeah!”

Kenichi and the others approached the children after Megumi called for them. As they did, Kenichi spoke to the other Sun Rangers with a serious expression.

“…Everyone, our responsibility is huge.”

“I know. We’re not the same we were last year.”

“I can’t just sit around eating.”

“It’s a little embarrassing though.”

The Sun Rangers were different from what they had been a year ago. While their abilities were still in development, but they were now well aware of what they couldn’t let down.

That’s why they made up their minds.

That regardless of outcome, they would fight in a way the children would be proud of them.

Part 2

Koutarou and the others were currently in the stronghold of the People of the Earth's conservative faction. This stronghold was a refuge facility that had been prepared in the case of an unexpected situation. Koutarou and the others had gathered there to swiftly decide on a strategy and prepare their equipment for the coming battle with the radical faction.

They were currently in the conference room, in the middle of a strategy meeting. Those related to room 106 and those in important positions amongst the conservative faction had gathered and had been discussing for a quite a while now. Only professor Roppongi was present for the meeting amongst those related to the Sun Rangers. Since the Sun Rangers were training with their weapons, the meeting was left in Roppongi's hands.

"…Then let's go over what's been decided."

Kiriha, who was the commander of the entire operation, was leading the meeting. Once the entire strategy had been decided on she explained it part by part with a severe expression.

"Theia-dono will be the surface troops. Ruth, Shizuka, Maki, the Sun Rangers and 80 of the conservative faction's combat unit will be part of this, for a total of 89 men."

Koutarou and the others had decided to divide their troops for the upcoming battle with the radical faction. There were the surface troops that would seize control of the earthquake weapon, and the underground troops that would capture the radical faction's leaders.

Members that could use large-scale attacks were primarily chosen as members of the surface troops. Such as Theia and Ruth who could use their battleship, the Blue Knight, and Shizuka who held the power of a dragon inside of her. And based on the information they had gathered, there was a chance that Maya had cast some kind of spell on the earthquake weapon, so Maki would be tagging along with them.

The Sun Rangers were chosen for the surface troops, not only because they were more suitable for a surface battle, but also because of political reasons. Rather than intervening in foreign political matters, dealing with a threat on the surface was closer to their original duty. This was decided to keep the surface and underground from conflicting.

On top of this, 80 members of the conservative faction's combat unit would join as well. Because the conservative faction's forces were small, this number was about the maximum amount of soldiers that could be mustered. Any more than this might also cause troubles with movement, so it was considered an appropriate number.

"The underground troops will consist of Koutarou, Yurika, Harumi and Sanae under my command. On top of that another 15 of the conservative faction's troops will join, giving us a total of 20."

The underground troops instead had a very flexible composition. With the calm and quick-witted Kiriha in the lead, Koutarou who fought using all kinds of powers, Yurika and Harumi who could use magic, and Sanae who could sense and detect enemies better than anyone with her spiritual powers they could adapt and avoid fighting as much as possible with their smaller numbers.

With 20 of Kiriha's subordinates with them, they were still just a quarter of the ground troops numbers. But underground, in narrow spots, having a larger number was often wasted, that's why 20 was considered the optimal balance between fighting power and stealth.

"Clan-dono will standby in the sky in the Cradle and cover where needed."

Clan was an exception who wasn't part of either troop. She had two primary jobs. She would communicate with the surface and underground, and support them in their battle.

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Since the battle would take place on the surface and underground it would normally be impossible to communicate, but it was barely possible through the use of Forthorthe's gravitational wave communications. Yet even then it would be hard to connect to those underground. So Clan would standby in the Cradle, relaying communications from her position. With that, it should be possible for the two troops to cooperate flawlessly.

On top of that she would support both troops, from analyzing information to transferring supplies.

While these two jobs might seem plain, they were incredibly important.

"The underground troops will move first, and once we have located the enemy's base, both troops will begin their attack simultaneously. Since both sides will act as a diversion for the other, the timing of the attack is of utmost importance."

Currently, the position of the earthquake weapon was all but confirmed, however, the radical faction's base still hadn't been determined. While there are some leads, they would have to search as they headed underground.

Once the radical faction's base has been found, a simultaneous attack would be launched on the base and earthquake weapon.

"The mission will begin as of 1900 today, we will begin after the sun sets."

As the season was drawing near summer, the sun would set around 7PM. An attack would stand out less after the sun had set, and since neither side wanted to be seen, taking action after sunset was inevitable.

"That is all for the outline of the strategy. Any questions?"

After finishing reviewing the strategy, Kiriha looked around the room. Her eyes were more serious than ever, today she simply couldn't smile, and that wasn't limited to just Kiriha. The same was true for the other girls as well. This was their first time ever launching a full-scale attack like this.

"…Then this strategy meeting is now over. Begin your preparations."

There were no questions regarding the strategy. Everyone had fully grasped that what lay ahead of them was a battle more fierce than they had ever experienced before.

Part 3

As someone who led many, Kurano Kiriha had very few who she could show her true self to. One of those few was her father, Kurano Daiha, and she was currently in her own room, in the middle of speaking with Daiha.

“…The radicals have come telling us to surrender right away, dangling the existence of earthquake weapon of theirs.”

“So that really was their goal.”

“By feeding you information directly, they omit the need for us to confirm it, not allowing us to buy any time… Maguz is tough.”

“What are you planning on doing?”

“I can’t tell you over the phone… What a pitiful story, I’m not even able to speak frankly with my daughter.”

“I agree.”

As they faced this important situation, Daiha couldn’t even tell his daughter the truth because the existence of magicians and out of fear of informers. And the same was true for Kiriha. Even if she was talking to her father, she couldn’t tell him the plans for the mission. It was pitiful and sad. As a result her expression remained serious, it was an expression that was unbecoming of her.

“I will convey the details at a later date. Until then, act upon your own judgment, Kiriha.”

Daiha didn’t know that Kiriha was going to launch an attack on the radical faction. However, he was able to grasp something upon seeing the determination in her eyes. He was still a parent, and he was able to imagine that Kiriha was planning something big. Things made a lot more sense when he began thinking that this call was related to that. While Daiha might look calm on the surface, he was uneasy on the inside and wanted to encourage his daughter in some way.

“Thank you very much, Chief.”

“I’m glad I could get a look at you. By the way, Kiriha, there’s talk about arranged marriage—”

“I don’t need it. I’m capable of finding my own fiancé.”

“You still remain unmoving on that point… You look just like her.”

Daiha smiled. Regardless of the severe situation, Kiriha showed a more feminine expression upon marriage being brought up. While this was the best he could do over a call, Daiha felt satisfied being able to act like a father at least a little bit.

Once the call was over, Kiriha leaned back on her chair and let out a sigh. She had been able to get a look at her father before the battle, all that was left was to do her best.

“…So that’s your father, Kiriha-san.”

That was when a voice called out to Kiriha. It was Koutarou who had come to her room, looking for her.

“Koutarou… you were listening?”

“Sorry. I didn’t intend on eavesdropping.”

Koutarou presented a document to Kiriha. He had come to her room to deliver this to her. There were a lot of items in the document, and all of them signaled that preparations were complete. This document was telling her that all that was left was waiting until the mission began.

“From where were you listening?”

“From your arranged marriage.”

“Then you didn’t hear anything.”

“I did. Talks of your marriage is a major point of interest.”

“Does it worry you?”

“The only thing that worries me is your happiness.”

“Then you don’t need to worry. Plans for the future have already been laid out.”

“Then that’s good.”

Kiriha smiled, and upon seeing that smile, Koutarou felt like there was no more need for him to say anything. He had been worried that Kiriha was feeling down all by herself again. Either her talk with her father had cheered her up, or she had never been feeling down in the first place. Either way, there was no need for Koutarou to worry.

“But still… it’s pretty weird.”

Koutarou decided to change the topic, he didn’t mind if it was something insignificant.

“What is?”

“At first you came to invade, and now you’re working your hardest to stop an invasion.”

“The invasion I desire isn’t one based on stealing.”

“But because you never quite showed those intentions of yours you ended up sending me for quite a loop.”

Kiriha’s invasion wasn’t one that harmed life or dignity. While the People of the Earth themselves were practically illegal, and they were unable to obey the law, she didn’t want someone to get hurt.

But at first, Kiriha hadn’t told Koutarou that. That was both to buy time, and because she didn’t know what kind of person Koutarou was, but as a result, Koutarou ended up having quite a hard time.

“Thinking back to it now it was quite strange. While claiming that you knew how it felt to be stolen from and be hurt, you claimed you would be mass producing weapons like those haniwas to invade… I should have put more thought into it back then.”

“I’m sorry for deceiving you. But because of that I was able to silence the radical faction for a while. And most of all… I was able to reunite with the person I love.”

Kiriha smiled as she spoke and put her hand on top of her chest. Past her hand was that card. It was the card she had gotten as a present from the person she loved back when she was a child.

“I’m not angry. I know you were in a tough spot.”

“Thank you, Koutarou.”

To Koutarou, Kiriha’s smile overlapped with the smile of the girl he had met eleven years ago. The girl whose eyes had sparkled upon seeing the surface world for the first time, and who had gotten disappointed because she hadn’t been able to ride the roller coaster. Because of that, a certain wish grew inside of Koutarou.

“Hey, Kiriha-san.”

“Hm?”

“Once all of this is over… let’s go ride the roller coaster again.”

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Kiriha kept herself from being selfish, ever since she was a child. She might be holding something in even now. But once the battle was over, there was no need for that, and Koutarou felt like the roller coaster was the perfect first step to let her do as she pleased.

“…Koutarou…”

But that was when something unexpected happened. Still smiling, tears streamed down from Kiriha’s eyes.

“H-Hey, what’s wrong?”

Not having expected Kiriha to cry, Koutarou looked at her with worry in his face. Kiriha looked up at Koutarou with her eyes full of tears.

“You just said something that can never be taken back… are you aware of that…?”

Kiriha put her hands in front of her chest, holding back the feelings that were on the verge of bursting out.

“Kiriha-san…”

“You… shouldn’t be dense enough to not understand what saying that means to Kiriha and Kii…”

Inside of Kiriha were two girls. They were Kiriha herself, and the lonely little Kii who rarely showed herself. The two of them each had their own feelings regarding that roller coaster. So they couldn’t help but expect something special upon being asked to go ride on the roller coaster after everything was through and done.

“I know. But… I couldn’t find any more suitable words.”

Koutarou was well aware. Well aware, yet he couldn’t find any other words. Considering the relationship they had built up, there weren’t any words more suitable than these.

“Then… there’s something I want to ask.”

“What?”

“Would you mind if I hugged you right now…?”

“…Is that something you even have to ask?”

Koutarou smiled wryly at Kiriha’s question and spread open his arms.

“Koutarou!”

Kiriha sprung of her seat and leaped into Koutarou’s arms, embracing him. Koutarou responded by hugging her back. Kiriha then continued crying, with her shoulders trembling.

“There you have it, so let’s go solve these problems.”

Koutarou patted Kiriha on the back. Kiriha continued crying inside of Koutarou’s arms for a while.

“Yeah… I love you, Onii-chan…”

Kiriha had gotten another goal. For its sake, she would give it her all.

While she continued to cry, strong positive emotions filled her chest.

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Part 4

As the clock turned 7PM, it was time for the mission to start and Koutarou, the girls of room 106 and the Sun Rangers gathered in the entrance hall. Koutarou and the others of the underground troops would be the first to depart. The others were there to see them off.

“Koutarou, you get it don’t you? You’re only allowed to lose against us. I won’t forgive defeat against anyone else. Win, and come back unharmed.”

“Don’t be so unreasonable. That aside, Theia, you be careful too. You already stand out enough as it is, so don’t get reckless.”

“Kiriha-sama, please stay safe. And please take care of Master.”

“Thank you, Ruth. I’ve looked through the manual for Koutarou’s armor, there’s no need to worry.”

“Sanae-san, make sure you come back in one piece so you can wear the band of knight’s uniform.”

“Yeah! …So Maki’s is indigo. I wonder what color I should be… fufufu~”

“Ugh, my stomach hurts…”

“Oh, even Yurika-chan is nervous?”

“I-I ate too much… uuhhh.”

“Let’s go on a diet together once everything is over.”

“Harumi, PAF will last for at least another 24 hours, but bear in mind to change your power pack while you can.”

“You mean to always be prepared for the unexpected. I understand, I’ll be careful.”

Koutarou and the nine girls wished each other good luck and said their farewells. If everything went according to plan, they wouldn’t meet again until the battle was over. That’s why their farewells today seemed to have a more lonely atmosphere to them than usual.

I guess it can’t be helped. Even though they’re all strong, they’re still normal girls…

Koutarou could easily tell the girls were nervous. It was the same nervosity he had felt before major battles in the past Forthorthe. Amongst the girls, only Clan knew of this nervosity.

“Sun Rangers, take care of everyone. They’re all strong, but they don’t have a lot of actual combat experience.”

Koutarou lowered his head to the Sun Rangers. Since they were part of the surface troops, they would accompany Theia and the others instead of Koutarou. While the Sun Rangers had less power than Theia and the others, they were far above them when it came to actual experience. Koutarou wanted to rely on that experience this time.

“Please leave it to us, Baron-san. The only thing we five can take pride in is our experience.”

“Baron-sama is relying on me! Relying! I’m soooo haaappyyy!”

“Megu-chan, this important so let’s step over here for a while.”

“I think about it from time to time, but… Megu-neechan is a big shot, isn’t she?”

“She’s the same as always even in this kind of situation… you might have a good point.”

“I’m counting on you, Sun Rangers.”

“Yes.”

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Koutarou and Kenichi gently bumped fists. A promise between soldiers stayed the same regardless of the era.

“Koutarou.”

As if waiting for that moment, Kiriha called for Koutarou. As he looked in the direction of the voice, the underground troops were all gathered.

From room 106 were Kiriha, Sanae, Yurika and Harumi. On top of that were 20 of Kiriha’s subordinates. With Koutarou, they were a total of 25 heading underground.

“Then we’re going. You guys be careful.”

Koutarou bid his farewells to those that would remain behind and headed towards the rest of the underground troops.

“Make sure you return!”

“Master, leave everything here to me during your absence!”

“Nijino Yurika! Be careful of Maya-sama!”

“Kii, you are not alone! Rely on your allies!”

“Everyone, stay well!”

Many voices rang out to the departing underground troops and Koutarou. They were all voices that made him want to stay, but Koutarou joined the rest of the underground troops without looking back.

Thus, Koutarou and many more headed underground.

Koutarou and the others were using a passage that had been sealed for several decades to travel underground. There were many passages that led underground, but one of these led to an old city where no one lived anymore due to the population decline. You could call it a place forgotten by time. It was a perfect place to infiltrate from as long as the seal could be broken.

Kiriha didn’t want the radical faction to figure out her plans for the use of military force, so the troops were headed underground through a hidden route, rather than an official one.

“Alright, I’ll take a look on the other side.”

Having been a ghost, Sanae was able to leave her body and observe the other side of the sealed door.

“Come back soon, Sanae-chan!”

The other Sanae that had been left behind, in other words, the Sanae that had been hospitalized, saw her off with a worried look. Aware or not, the ghost Sanae passed through the door.

“How does it look?”

“U-Uhm… it doesn’t look like there’s anyone nearby.”

As Koutarou asked her, Sanae-san who had been left behind reported on what Sanae-chan saw. The two hadn’t completely divided and were still connected through spiritual energy. While it looked like they had split into two, their soul was one, and their memory was shared. They were two in one.

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“It looks like there are bats, moles and bugs though.”

“Hiiiiii!”

Upon hearing the use of the word bugs, Yurika let out a scream. She hated bugs.

“You were fine with beetles weren’t you?”

“I hate spiders, crawly ones and those that are venomous~”

With her eyes moistening, Yurika sprayed about her insect repellent. When she learned that she would be going underground, this was the first thing she prepared.

“Karama, Korama, open it up.”

“Got it Ho-, Nee-san!”

“Leave it to us Ho-!”

While Yurika was still spraying away, Kiriha gave the haniwas the order to open up the door. First Karama connected its personal spiritual energy generator to the door via a cable and supplied it with energy. This revived the door’s panel, which Korama analyzed and removed the lock. In total it took them about ten seconds. Since there was such a gap in performance between the old door that had been abandoned for decades and the haniwas, they seemingly opened the door up without any problems.

“Koutarou, please open it Ho-!”

“We’ll leave the physical labor to you Ho-!”

“Okay, okay.”

Since he couldn’t help but stand out when wearing it, Koutarou still didn’t have his armor on. But even then, Koutarou was the strongest of the group.

Koutarou grabbed the door and pulled it open with all of his might. As it moved it made an irritating screech while slowly opening. Sanae-chan returned through the gap of the open door.

“I’m back!”

With a cheerful smile she hugged Koutarou’s back.

“Sanae, this isn’t where you should be returning. It’s over there.”

Koutarou pointed in the direction of Sanae-san.

“Hurry and come back, Sanae-chan!”

Being timid, she couldn’t help but be embarrassed by standing next to her beloved Koutarou, and she wanted to merge with Sanae-chan as quickly as possible.

“…If you love him then just say so.”

“Don’t be mea~n.”

“Sanae hurry up and go back to normal. We’ve got to go.”

“But this way, you can see better in the dark, Koutarou. Look.”

Sanae understood the situation as well, and wasn’t actually playing around. Since Koutarou’s ability to see spiritual energy came from Sanae, she was far superior at it. But if she clung onto his back, her ability was conveyed to Koutarou. It was indeed convenient when walking down a passage without light.

“I see. Then let’s go like this.”

“If you get it then praise me.”

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“You did good, very good.”

“Fufu~n.”

“In this state, I should take the lead. Everyone, follow me.”

“Let’s go!”

“Wait! Don’t leave me behind!”

Koutarou entered the passage with Sanae-chan still on his back and Sanae-san panickingly chased after the two. Seeing Koutarou and the others like that, Harumi and Kiriha smiled at each other.

“What a mysterious sight.”

“I never thought I’d get to see the definition of getting ahead of oneself play out before my eyes.”

“Really. Fufufu.”

“P-Please waiii~t!”

Harumi, Kiriha and her subordinates followed after Koutarou.

Like that, Koutarou and the others stepped into the domain of the People of the Earth.

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Part 5

While the design of the passage leading to the underground world was old, it was firmly made. The walls and floors were built with something similar to concrete. Despite not having been used for decades there was no sign of decay. It was a structure that showed off the People of the Earth's constructional skills.

"…It has a similar atmosphere to Kiriha-san's room."

That was the impression Koutarou got upon seeing the passage. It was simple, but had a sturdy make, and it felt similar to Kiriha's room underneath room 106.

"It's built using the same traditional method after all."

"I see… with more advanced construction techniques even stuff like concrete is considered a traditional construction method."

"We excel at technology that can endure moisture and pressure."

"You might do well to patent future advances in that field."

"I see, I'll keep that in mind."

The party progressed down the old yet modern passage. In the lead was Koutarou, carrying Sanae-chan on his back. After him came Kiriha, Sanae-san, Harumi, Yurika and finally Kiriha's 20 subordinates. Normally travelling in a group of 25 would be quite noisy, but thanks to Yurika having cast a spell to erase the sounds of their footsteps, there was not a single noise to be heard. They were scanning for enemies using spiritual energy and using magic to conceal their presence. It could be called an ideal infiltration method.

"Koutarou, stop!"

"There's something there!"

As Sanae-chan leaned forward from Koutarou's back and peered forward, Sanae-san grabbed Koutarou's hand and stopped him. Being two in one, their coordination was perfect.

"Sanae, what's that something?"

"It doesn't seem to be human. It feels a bit like Karama-chan and Korama-chan."

"Further ahead of this passage are two corners and its just past that. It's getting closer but it doesn't seemed to have noticed us yet."

"Kiriha-san, what do you think it is."

"It's probably an automated spiritual energy weapon like Karama and Korama. They're perfect as guards for remote places like this."

Spiritual energy weapons like Karama and Korama used the spiritual energy their own souls emitted alongside the spiritual energy around them to move. As a result, they practically never needed to replenish until their parts and catalysts were consumed. They were very useful for guarding places where intruders were very rare but not unthinkable.

"Are you good with these kind of places?"

"No Ho-. We don't like dark and narrow places Ho-"

"The radical factions have some that do though Ho-"

"You mean like the clay dolls that attacked at the amusement park?"

"Probably. The radical faction probably placed guards here just in case."

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The spiritual energy weapons that the conservative faction used were primarily used as daily guards and servants, and were given souls similar to humans. Because of that they felt lonely when left alone. Karama's and Korama's tendencies for this was especially strong, but this kind of tendency was common amongst the conservative faction.

However, the radical faction only used them as pure weapons. As a result their souls were far more mechanical. They were closer to a computer program than a soul. That's why they never complained regardless of what job they were given and didn't feel lonely. While they were efficient, the radical faction had no attachment to their tools. The People of the Earth shared the same idea as the Japanese that a soul would eventually reside in a tool was used for many years.[1] Comparing the two factions, the radical faction was literally in too much of a hurry.

"So what do we do, Kurano-san? If we don't decide soon that clay doll will come."

Like Harumi pointed out, the assumed spiritual energy weapon of the radical faction was closing in. A measure needed to be decided on swiftly.

"Let's go back and take a detour. I don't want us to be found, and we can't go and destroy it."

Kiriha quickly decided.

She believed that the reason for the spiritual energy weapon being deployed in this area alone was to detect intruders, rather than stop them. There was no need for them to go out of their way to destroy it.

With that in mind it was best to just pass by the clay doll. Being found or destroying the clay doll would just let the radical faction know of their existence.

"Alright, let's go. And Yurika, could you power up your camouflage spell just in case?"

"I got it."

Upon Koutarou's directions, Yurika readied her magical cane. Koutarou and the others waited for Yurika to finish her spell and then turn back the way they came.

[1] This refers to the Tsukumogami (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsukumogami)

Part 6

Like Kiriha had expected, Sanae had detected a clay doll spiritual energy weapon. It was several times larger than Karama and Korama, and it had a sharper shape fitting of a weapon. With their superior numbers they could easily overcome it, but one on one it was a dangerous opponent.

Koutarou and the others avoided contact with the clay doll and detoured around it. With the help of Yurika's spell, they got past the clay doll undetected, and now Koutarou was in the lead again as they continued walking down the passage.

"Hey Kiriha, how far are we?"

"Just a little further up ahead there is an elevator. If we go down that we'll be able to reach quite deeply. Distance we are probably less than half ways, but we should be there shortly."

"Hmm, so it's a little longer. Hey Harumi, are you okay?"

"I'm okay. Thank you, Higashihongan-san."

"If anything happens you let me, the leader, know right away okay?"

"Okay. Fufufu…"

After passing by the clay doll the group had been able to progress to their next destination without running into any more threats. There, there was a transportation elevator that led to the underground world. Since the clay doll was using it to transport, there was light at the operating panel.

"So we're getting on this?"

Reaching the elevator, Yurika was about to casually push the elevator call button.

"Wait, stop!"

Koutarou grabbed Yurika the moment before she could touch the button.

"Kyaa!? W-What is it!?"

Yurika was surprised by the sudden event and stared at Koutarou with eyes wide. After confirming that the button hadn't been pressed Koutarou let out a sigh of relief.

"Give me a break, Yurika. If the elevator moves they'll notice us."

"Ah, r-right, sorry."

Yurika realized the circumstances and blushed.

If the radical faction were to ambush them, just past this elevator would be the ideal. If they realized that Koutarou and the others were onboard the elevator, it was obvious that they would attack the moment the elevator reached its destination.

"We're already in enemy territory, be careful, Yurika."

"Y-Yes…"

Seeing Yurika nod, Koutarou let her go as he dropped his shoulders. Being set free, Yurika chased after Koutarou with her eyes with her cheeks still flushed.

Couldn't he have had more of a reaction… he just hugged a girl after all…

Yurika was well aware that now wasn't the time to think about stuff like that, but she felt sad that Koutarou wasn't giving her more consideration.

"Kiriha-san, we can do something about it, right?"

To the Underground World

Unaware of Yurika's thoughts, Koutarou called out to Kiriha. After looking at Kiriha for a while, Yurika looked down on her own chest and sighed.

"Indeed. It does seem to have some security on it, but it's decades old. It's no match for our present technology."

"Ho-, leave it to us Ho-"

"HoHo-, now it's our time to shine Ho-"

Karama and Korama began messing around with the elevator's panel. It was troublesome that involved deceiving all kinds of surveillance systems, but as Kiriha had said, the haniwas didn't seem to struggle in the slightest.

Part 7

An hour had passed since passing through the first door, and after riding the elevator down, walking down some stairs and through a passage, Koutarou and the others reached the underground world.

“So this is Kurano-san’s hometown…”

Having seen the underground world for the first time, Harumi stared with her eyes wide open. She was seeing a splendid view of a town at night, which at first glance didn’t look like it was underground. There, Kiriha smiled and called out to Harumi.

“That’s right… this is the largest city the People of the Earth has built up over hundreds of years, the town of Sial.”

Her proud smile showed that this city held a special meaning to the People of the Earth.

According to the People of the Earth’s legends, their ancestors were chased away from their homes after committing a cardinal sin. At the end of their exodus they reached the area around Kitsushouharukaze city, and established their new hometown. While they held advanced technology, looking back at their sins, they kept away from power. As a result, they limited themselves to a small area.

Supported by their advanced technology and culture, they lived peacefully for a long time. However, as time passed, the civilization of the people living around them advanced, and their territories clashed. When that happened, friction between the two civilizations naturally occurred. Once that friction crossed a certain line, the People of the Earth’s ancestors decided to move underground. While it wouldn’t be hard for them to suppress the opposition with their advanced technology, their legends and myths claimed that domination and power would lead to ruin. So the majority of them decided to move underground, with only a few leaving behind their technology and remaining on the surface. Thus, the civilization that moved underground became the People of the Earth.

Life after that was far from easy. However, the People of the Earth united to face their problems, and built the splendid town of Sial underground. After hundreds of years of building onto the town, it evolved into a modern city. As a result, the People of the Earth prospered after abandoning conflict. That was why this city was not only the hometown of many, but a symbol of unity.

“But… this side is dark.”

The People of the Earth’s hometown was built inside of a massive cave, filling it up entirely. As it was currently night, there were lights keeping the city bright, and light leaked out from the windows of the various houses, creating a beautiful night view. However, that was limited to the northern side of the city. In the southern side where Koutarou and the others were, it was for some reason almost no lights. That confused Sanae as she looked around.

“This is the old district… with the decrease in population, this side isn’t being used.”

Kiriha answered Sanae’s question, but her expression was lonely.

Even the prosperous People of the Earth had suffered a decrease in population as the surface developed. Their current population was less than half of their prime. As a result the southern district of the city had been abandoned. Thanks to the excellent construction however, the district remained the same despite no one living there. It was an afterimage of their prime, the old district was proof of the People of the Earth’s decline. To Kiriha who was a born and raised People of the Earth, looking at this uninhabited district made her sad. When she looked at the empty district she felt like their unity and pride had been lost.

To the Underground World

“So where do we go now?”

“We’ll group up with our allies at an old guard room. This way.”

Kiriha led the troops and walked down a road in the old district. Their destination was what had been a staff room for guards in the past. On the surface, it was something similar to a police station. There they would join up with the conservative faction forces underground, and prepare for the battle with the radical faction.

“Clan, Clan.”

As Koutarou followed Kiriha, he opened up a channel to Clan through his bracelet.

“What is it?”

A hologram of Clan soon appeared. Since she was on standby as everyone’s backup, her response was quick.

“We’ve reached the People of the Earth’s city. Can you pick up the signal from that transmitter?”

The transmitters that Koutarou was referring to were something he had attached to five trailers in the radical faction’s factory. One of the trailers had been confirmed going underground, and Koutarou wanted to know where it had gone as there was a high chance that it led to the radical faction’s base.

“Please wait a moment.”

Clan remotely controlled Koutarou’s bracelet in an attempt to pick up the signal.

“It seems like there’s still some distance left, as all I can give you is that it’s somewhere to your north. If you give me some more time, I can analyze it fully though.”

But sadly, she couldn’t clearly calculate its position. Either Koutarou would have to get closer to the source, or more time needed to be spent analyzing the signal.

“Keep taking data and analyze it please.”

“I’ll contact you once I’ve got something.”

“Please do.”

Just as Koutarou and Clan had finished the call, an explosion happened to the north, on the still populated side of the city.

It wasn’t that large of an explosion, but it wasn’t a single one. Like a roar of thunder, the explosions happened one after another. Surprised by this, Koutarou and the others stopped and looked towards the northern district. There they saw a furiously burning fire had replaced some of the night view. It was fire that had occurred from the explosions.

“A fire… was it an accident?”

“You’re wrong Harumi-chan Ho-! There’s nothing over there that could explode Ho-!”

“Ane-san, based on the distance and sound it’s very likely that it was an explosion from portable firearms Ho-”

“Not good… the radical faction made the first move!”

Kiriha’s expression turned severe. It was hard to believe that this was an attack by the conservative faction at this timing. Based on their policies, the conservative faction wouldn’t attack until they rejected the radical faction’s demands of surrender. It was more natural to assume that the radical faction had launched an attack as the conservative faction was taking such a long time to respond.

To the Underground World

“Kiriha-san, let’s hurry and meet up with our allies! We’ll start from there!”

“You’re right. Thank you, Koutarou… Everyone, follow me!”

The situation was growing tense and Koutarou and the others had no time to hesitate.

Sortie

Part 1

Sunday, July 4

30 minutes after Koutarou and the others departed, the surface troops led by Theia began moving out. Their destination was an uninhabited island off the coast of Kitsushouharukaze city. On that island was the radical faction's secret base. And on it, should be a weapon of mass destruction that would cause massive damage both to the surface and to the underground. Theia's surface troop's objective was to destroy that weapon, the Earth Dragon.

The girls of room 106, the Sun Rangers and 80 of Kiriha's subordinates were waiting to arrive at their destination onboard the Cradle's cargo compartment. Everyone had stern expressions as they were all aware that this battle would decide their future.

"…This is the first time I've seen this kind of vehicle."

"We have a bunch of strange tools too, but… this is on a league of its own."

Amongst them, the Sun Rangers seemed the most shaken. But that wasn't because of the coming battle, but because of the strange vehicle carrying them.

It had a design they had never seen before that relied heavily on curves. While they had heard the sound of boosters at take off, they were flying far quieter than a plane. On top of that the flight was incredibly stable, and it hardly shook at all. The guide onboard was filled with characters and signs they had never seen before, and not even the international standard of English could be found.

At first the Sun Rangers believed that it might be a secret weapon designed by a different country, but that confidence gradually vanished. It felt like they had been thrown into a different world, especially the more intelligent Kotarou and Hayato.

"Everyone, I know it's strange, but let's not think too much about it. Everyone has their own circumstances. The important thing is that we can land on that island without being detected thanks to this thing."

Kenichi was filled with doubts as well, but he had no intentions of pursuing the matter.

The Sun Rangers would participate in this battle, but it was unofficial, and they couldn't make their circumstances public. It wouldn't be strange for the others to be in a similar position. As long as they were allies, it was best for both sides not to touch the subject.

"…Sorry for making you take us into consideration, Red Shine."

Theia smiled wryly. Truth be told, overlooking it all, Theia was an invader, and the Sun Rangers enemy. It would be difficult to gauge whether they would understand even if she told them the truth. So Kenichi's consideration was a welcome thing.

"No… that goes both ways."

"Our positions might be complicated… but there's one thing that's certain."

There was much she couldn't say, but there was something she wanted to mention. That was that Theia and the others were the Sun Rangers' allies.

"We will only fight against those that Koutarou has decided to fight. We won't fight against anyone else."

"Those Baron-san has…"

"You don't have to believe us. But… at least believe in his honest to a fault side. We are all in consensus of that."

Sortie

What supported Theia's and the others relationship was the time spent together and memories they had gained. There had never been any real reason or cause for it. Getting others to understand that would be hard. That's why she wanted them to believe in Koutarou, who was the central figure. She didn't have any other means of showing that they were the Sun Rangers' allies.

"If it's up to Baron-san's judgment, then we can relax."

Kenichi nodded with a smile. Theia's words were easy for him to understand as well. His goal was simply to become a splendid hero that could fight against Baron Demon. And if it was up to that Baron Demon, then there was no need for doubt.

"That's right everyone♪ The moment Baron-sama showed that serious expression of his, it no longer mattered who these girls are♪ You're both so silly, Kotarou and Hayato♪"

"The preserved food on this vehicle is really delicious. Someone that can make food this delicious could never be a bad person."

Megumi and Daisaku remained consistent from beginning to end. These two had completely trusted Koutarou from the very beginning. While they could be called easily deceived, their judgment this time was correct.

"We'll want to avoid any developments that would make the children cry, right?"

"Yeah. Since we're going by the name of the Sun Squad, we have to walk the path of justice."

Kotarou and Hayato soon gave up on thinking of the true identity of the Cradle. Neither of them wanted to doubt Theia and the others. They had simply been shaken up by seeing something they had never laid their eyes on before. Nor did they want to let down the underground children they had met just a while ago.

"Thank you, Sun Rangers. You really are… the real deal."

"We still have a long way to go."

"Naturally. The real deal always aims for new heights."

"Devil Princess-san…"

"I'm counting on you today, Sun Rangers."

"Yes, please leave it to us!"

While the tension couldn't be concealed, the unity and morale of the 89 troops led by Theia was high. It was clear how fierce of a battle they would be in soon, but not having to worry about any problems amongst the troops was a positive factor.

Part 2

The surface troops landed on the southern coast of the island in question. The radical faction's base was on a hilly mountain north of this point. While Clan's Cradle was highly adept at stealth, it was best not to get overconfident and move on ahead on foot from here on. That's why the Cradle hurriedly flew off after unloading Theia and the others. From here on out, they would need to advance on their own.

While approaching the base they needed to stay as hidden as possible. So they started by securing their surroundings.

"…There's no sign of the enemy."

Shizuka reported as she checked her surroundings. Though it was dark as the sun had set, it didn't matter to Shizuka who held the Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya inside of her. On top of that, her ability to sense presences gained through her martial arts training covered quite a wide area, and she was able to sense all creatures around her. But she didn't sense any other humans.

"I can't sense any magical power either."

Maki who was next to Shizuka added onto her report. According to her examination of the area through spells, there were no signs of magic. Maki had been worried that Maya may have cast a magical defense network around the area, but that didn't seem to be the case.

I can't imagine that Maya-sama would let her guard down… is it that much harder for her to use magic with her mechanical body, or does she have some other goal…?

Maki knew her master better than anyone. Though she didn't sense any magic around her, she wasn't going to let her guard down.

"Ruth, how does it look?"

"There are no reactions on the EM, gravity waves or spiritual energy sensors. It seems like this region is outside of their area of precaution."

Ruth was in charge of the scientific approach. She was operating a device floating overhead and searched the area. This device had been modified to detect auras, so it could detect spiritual energy technology as well. However, there was no reaction on any of the sensors, so the area seemed safe from a scientific standpoint too.

"Hmm… so that's a successful landing."

Upon hearing the three's reports, Theia nodded approvingly. As she did, the Sun Rangers that had remained quiet gave their opinions.

"It's probably because there's a mountain in the way."

"But we can't let our guard down. If it was me, I'd monitor this side of the island using cameras from the top of the mountain."

Though small, there was a mountain on the island, making it inefficient to survey the entire island. The Sun Rangers experience told them that it was most likely that the northern side was being properly monitored, whilst the southern side was being surveyed through cameras.

"Devil Princess-san, let's hurry on ahead. Though it might be night, we'll stand out in this place."

"You're right. Men, advance without letting your guard down."

Theia listened to the Sun Rangers advice, swiftly made her decision and led the way forward herself. If everything went according to the schedule, Koutarou and the others would arrive at

the underground world in 30 minutes. Their attack shouldn’t begin until after that, but she wanted to have room to spare when the time came.

Sortie

Part 3

Though it was an uninhabited island, it was still just off the coast of Japan, and there was nothing special about it. The local fauna and animals were familiar, and the climate was the same. It also seemed like people had lived here before as there was a gravel road left behind.

The surface troops calmly advanced. The members, apart from Ruth, had a reputable athletic capability, and their steps were light.

“It’s at times like this where I’m grateful that there’s magic.”

Yet even Ruth could keep up with the troops. This was thanks to Maki’s spell. She had cast two spells on Ruth. One was a spell that slightly raised her physical capabilities, and the other was a spell that slightly lowered the environment’s temperature. Both effects were minimal, but when used together there was a synergy to it. Thanks to that, Ruth could follow the others without running out of breath.

Sortie

“I’m glad I could be of help, vice captain.”

“It’s a big help, Indigo Knight-dono.”

While the Satomi band of knights sounded impressive, being formed by the Blue Knight, there were currently only two other members apart from Koutarou. Currently, the band of knight’s only weapon was their teamwork. But fortunately, that teamwork was excellent.

“How nice, it looks so fun… I should join too.”

Shizuka sent the two an envious glance. Shizuka was part of the cooking society in the school, but its activities stopped at cooking. To Shizuka, the Satomi band of knights looked like the activity of a sports club.

The captain, Koutarou, and the vice captain, Ruth, were both without a doubt knights, but Maki was closer to an accountant. And soon, Sanae and Harumi were hoping to join as secretary or in charge of chores. At this rate it wouldn’t be long before a liberal arts band of knights. Theia who believed a band of knights should be just that, wanted more soldiers’ to join.

“Then how about you join with the princess knight, Theiamillis?”

“The mysterious and beautiful knight that appears in the Satomi band of knights’ time of need. And her identity is princess Theiamillis of all things… Hm, that route wouldn’t be too bad either.”

In Theia’s mind she was wearing a cute armor with a flower motif as its design and a mask studded with jewels concealing her eyes. It wouldn’t feel too bad protecting Koutarou, rather than only being protected.

“Wait, Theia-chan.”

But the next moment, Shizuka’s smiled instantly vanished.

“…There’s something there. Behind the bush in front of us.”

Shizuka’s sharp senses picked up someone’s presence. There was something holding hostility on the other side of a bush slightly to their left.

“Nobody move. Ruth, 50 meters away in our 11 o’clock direction.”

Theia signaled the 85 behind her to stop using her hand, and had Ruth search the point Shizuka had mentioned. Since Shizuka’s expression had changed, it wasn’t just some critter. Danger was approaching.

“Your highness, it seems to be a pack of medium sized beasts. Four in total.”

“Not good… there’s a magical reaction. They were either made from, or strengthened by magic.”

Ruth and Maki quickly identified the enemy.

“Everyone, get ready for combat. Don’t assume they’re simple beasts. Defeat them on sight!”

Theia judged that fighting could not be avoided any more.

The southern side has been turned into these magical beasts’ territory, and they patrol the area. They’ll catch their own food, and would heal from minor wounds… they’re ideal for guarding a large area for a long period of time.

While the radical faction had spiritual energy weapons that could guard an area, but having them patrol a large and irregular area would create a problem with maintenance. While they could gather spiritual energy from their surroundings, the parts would gradually be worn down.

On that point, creatures controlled by magic didn’t require maintenance. Turning the area you wanted them to guard into their territory, they would continue guarding the area until they died without the need for supplies or maintenance. Since magic was manual labor, large numbers

were difficult to prepare, but that was no problem for this kind of usage. The radical faction was putting the magical technology that they had gotten to good use. If that line of thinking was correct, a delay in preparations would be fatal.

Part 4

“Spread out into squads and combat under the commands of the squad leaders.”

The girls of room 106 spread out, each of them leading 20 conservative faction soldiers. This was how the surface troops fought.

“Sun Rangers, I’ll leave you to your own. Fight according to your own judgment.”

“Roger that.”

The remaining five, the Sun Rangers, were treated as a flying column. This was both because of their political position and in order to make use of their plentiful experience.

“They’re coming. Everyone stay calm.”

Before Shizuka finished speaking, four beasts leaped out from the bushes. They looked like dogs at first glance, but they were far bigger. They were biological weapons created through magic.

“Gaaoooo! Gaaoooo! Grrrrr!”

Angered because their territory had been invaded, the beasts charged towards the surface troops as they roared loudly. They moved far quicker than dogs, if anything it was closer to cheetahs. It also seemed like they possessed some intelligence as they zig-zagged like gazelles to avoid the guns. Their targets were the girls in charge. Their instincts had correctly seen through who the leaders were.

In response the surface troops formed two lines and faced off against the beasts. However, because of the beasts’ swift movements, the spiritual energy beams fired missed and flew far off.

Having evaded the rain of fire through their extraordinary movement abilities, the beasts closed in on the girls.

“Blue Knight! Emergency deployment of the distortion field!”

But if you were to call the beasts extraordinary, then so were the girls. The first among them to go on the counter offensive was Theia, with her excellent sense for battle. While blocking the claws aimed at her with her barrier, she scolded the 20 restless soldiers.

“Men, don’t try to take aim, simple fire straightforward! Seal of the area it can move through! Fire!”

Having recovered through Theia’s voice, the soldiers fired their rifles as one.

The sound sounded almost like a single shot. Because they had all aimed for the beast last time their arc had simply been 20 lines. However, since they fired straight forward this time their attacks covered an entire plane and assaulted the beast.

“Graaaaa!”

The beast jumped into the air without hesitation. Thanks to its speed it escaped with just some burnt fur, but its pride had been crushed. Determined to crunch down on the arrogant human, Theia, who had burnt its prideful fur, the beast scanned the area for her in the air. Once it landed it was going to attack her again.

“Hmm… even though you might be strengthened, your instinct when faced with danger is still that of a dog’s.”

However, by the time it found Theia, the beast realized its own defeat. She had a fearless smile and a powerful shine in her eyes. The beast had made a great mistake by assuming she was

the smallest and weakest of them all. The beast's instincts told it that it was facing a wolf in sheep's clothing.

"Blue Knight, Recoilless Pile Driver."

"As you wish, my princess."

That golden wolf's mane fluttered as she attacked the beast. In her front legs, golden thick and bulky claws appeared, and the beast that was free falling had no way to avoid them.

A kaboom rang out.

The wolf's claws, the mechanical pile driver, was a weapon that shot a hammer head out by detonating gunpowder. Simply put, it was a cannon used at close range. The hammer was driven into the beast's side and it's incredibly destructive power was demonstrated as the beast was beaten down in a single strike.

"…As expected from Theia-chan. You beat it right away."

Impressed by Theia's work, Shizuka wielded her own fists. When it came to pure combat capability, Shizuka was stronger with the Fire Dragon Emperor within her. But when adding in their 20 subordinates as well, Theia was stronger. Shizuka was an amateur at commanding, and she would end up focusing on herself, she wasn't able to make full use of her squad. That's why Shizuka was impressed by Theia.

"I can't stand here admiring her, I have to work hard too!"

Shizuka swung her leg and kicked the beast attacking her. The kick struck the beast's front leg, but the beast readjusted its posture and landed as if nothing had happened. It lightly dragged it's foot, but it hadn't suffered any decisive damage.

"Everyone, please!"

With distance having opened up between them again, the conservative faction began their attack once more. A bunch of spiritual energy was fired from the rifles and poured down towards the beast. Several of the attacks hit, probably because it had slightly slowed down from Shizuka's attack. The hits stripped the beast of its stamina, but it wasn't enough to defeat it, and it opened its jaws to crunch down on some of the nearby soldiers.

"I won't let you!"

Not going to let that happen, Shizuka rushed towards the beast. This had repeated itself a couple of times. Shizuka would protect the soldiers from the beast, and the soldiers would cover Shizuka's openings. Because of her lack of experience, she naturally stayed on the defensive.

"Should I help?"

"It's not your turn yet, uncle!"

Shizuka's fist struck the beast's face. Starting to panic from the accumulated damage, the beast's urge to attack grew stronger and Shizuka's fist completely threw it off balance and the soldiers' that the beast had aimed for escaped danger. Confirming that with a side glance, Shizuka continuously attacked.

"What does gaining a little weight do? It's not like it actually increases."

"I don't want others to think I've gotten heavier!"

The dragon inside of Shizuka offered to help, but she felt it wasn't the time for that yet. Considering what was going to happen today, she wanted to avoid wasting magical power and her circumstances as a maiden were probably mixed in as well.

"Won't you be better liked by the other sex with some more mass on you?"

“That’s only common sense for you uncle!”

Fortunately, Shizuka’s decision was correct. Having accumulated enough damage, the beast was no longer able to avoid Shizuka’s attacks. Once that happened, the fight tilted towards Shizuka’s favor.

“A human girl is better liked when she’s small and cute!”

The last kick using all of Shizuka’s strength struck the side of the beast’s head and lost consciousness.

“…I don’t believe you could be considered small and cute from the moment you could defeat monsters without weapons.”

Thus, the fight ended with Shizuka’s victory, but she didn’t seem very pleased.

Shizuka fought by standing on the front lines herself, Maki on the other hand, did the opposite. The magician Maki fell back and focused on supporting the soldiers.

“Keep it up. Everyone stay calm and continue attacking.”

Maki’s most skilled type of spells were mind manipulation and reinforcing, simply put they were spells dealing with the mind and improving people’s conditions. Using that, she increased her squad’s combat capabilities, and obstructed the beast.

“ Gaaoooo! Grrrrrrr!”

The soldiers attacked the beast. Only about ten percent of the attacks hit, but they were far more accurate than the other squads. This was the result of Maki’s spell that increased the soldiers’ reaction speed. As a result, only Maki’s squad weren’t overwhelmed by the beast’s movements and gradually damaged it each time they attacked. The beast was so focused on dodging that it never found an opportunity to charge forward, all it could do was letting out roars of anger.

“…Amplify – Fear.”

Maki unleashed a spell that limited the beast’s movements even further. Maki’s spell didn’t deal direct damage, but rather affected its mind. The spell amplified its fear, fueled its irritation and robbed it of its calmness. This proved very effective against the beast and its movements visibly grew worse. Once its movements worsened, the soldiers’ attacks hit. There was no need for Maki to attack herself.

“Force Field – Modifier – Area Effect.”

Maki would protect the soldiers with a defensive spell from time to time. It wasn’t that hard to block an attack from a slowed beast, and Maki safely enclosing the beast’s attack.

While it wasn’t a flashy way, the beast couldn’t attack or defend. That amplified its fear and irritation even further. The more it fought, the more it drove itself into a corner. It was a frightening strategy fit for a mind manipulating magician.

“Grrrr, Gaaaaaaaaa!”

Eventually the beast completely lost its calm and charged at Maki. It ignored the fire raining down on it and forcibly broke through the line of soldiers to leap at Maki.

“Tiny Memory Flash – Modifier – Touch Trigger.”

Maki on the other hand remained calm. She calmly chanted a spell and an indigo light wrapped around her cane. Holding the cane as a spear she faced down the beast charging her.

“Goooaaaa!”

“I’m sorry… that said, you’ll forget it in a moment.”

Sortie

The tip of Maki's cane touched the beast. As it did, all of the magic cast on the cane flowed into the beast. The spell in the cane was Maki's speciality that erased memories for a few seconds. The beast that had no knowledge of that spell had lost sight of Maki despite her being right in front of it. Having its memories rewound by a few seconds, it looked like she had instantly changed her position.

"I'll leave the rest to you."

Maki walked away from the beast that was at a loss. The next moment, the soldiers fired a rain of spiritual energy beams at the stopped beast. Not even the beast could do anything about this and it collapsed, no longer moving.

While three of the girls were fighting well, Ruth was being pushed back. Since she was better at managing information than moving her body, she was a bad match for the swift beast.

"Everyone, please don't step out of the distortion field!"

Ruth was wearing a powered armor, acting as a shield for her squad. Compared to standard barriers, the armor's barrier's output was higher. It performed more than well enough to block the beast's attack. Her squad attacked from behind. Since Forthorthe's barriers couldn't block spiritual energy, the attacks passed through the barrier, making a one-sided attack possible.

"Gaoo, Grrrr!"

However, the beast moved swiftly, and soldiers' attacks couldn't hit. As a result, neither side could seize an advantage.

This isn't a good situation…

Irritated by the situation, the beast moved around Ruth in an attempt to attack the soldiers behind. Ruth desperately tried to prevent it, but since the beast was faster she was at the mercy of the beast. At this rate Ruth would run out of stamina before the beams would hit.

"Are you okay!?"

"Sun Rangers!"

Having noticed that Ruth was having a hard time, the Sun Rangers moved to back her up.

"Megu-chan, drive it away with your gun!"

"Be careful, Daisaku-kun."

Red, Yellow and Pink placed themselves in the way so the beast couldn't get around.

"The wind is south-southwest, wind velocity one meter. Humidity is 68%. There's no need to correct with this wind speed and direction."

"Roger, moving to shoot… firing!"

Attacking was left to the remaining two, Blue and Green. The two were partners and they sniped the beast at a distance. It should be difficult to avoid this attack.

"Gaooo!"

"Miss!"

"Damnit, it's too fast!"

"Hayato-niichan, nothing will come from complaining."

"I know, I'm loading the next bullet!"

However, it was virtually impossible to hit the swift beast. It was difficult just finding it with the scope. Before they could even get to the problem with the beast dodging the bullets, they ran into a problem of aiming at the beast.

“We have to stop it from moving somehow…”

“There’s no need to worry, Red-san. Now that you are here we can win.”

“Eh?”

“Please use this data.”

Ruth sent data to the weapons that the Sun Rangers were using. The weapons that the Sun Rangers were currently using were borrowed Forthorthe weapons. It was only natural that they could share data.

“This data is?”

“It’s a simulation model of this monster’s habits. Though accuracy is low, you should be able to get a grasp of the timing of when it stops.”

Ruth had been gathering information on the beast while staying on the defensive, creating a simulation model on its movements. She was originally planning on using it herself to go on the counter attack, but fortunately, the Sun Rangers that were better at attacking than her had appeared. There, Ruth provided them with her simulation model and left attacking to them.

“We can do this, Hayato-niichan!”

“Alright!”

When Green’s shooting support computer executed Ruth’s model, a prediction of where the beast would be in two seconds appeared in Blue’s scope. According to Ruth’s calculation, the prediction had a 60% probability. But that was enough.

“Nii-chan!”

“Firing!”

“Miss!”

“Reloading!”

Blue’s first shot missed. However, Blue reloaded his gun without getting depressed. Then, the beast moved just as Ruth’s simulation model had predicted, and the beast slid into the center of Blue’s scope. And in that place it stopped for a moment. The two didn’t let that opening slip by.

“Now!”

“Firing!”

The bullet fired from Blue’s rifle hit the center of the beast’s body just as aimed. The bullet fired was a special taser bullet that discharged a high voltage upon hitting its target. Overcome with such high voltage, the beast’s body stiffened up and stopped moving. A single taser bullet wasn’t enough to incapacitate it.

“Megumi, the legs!”

“Got it!”

However, the Sun Rangers didn’t stop their attack there. Using a gun, she shot the beast’s legs. With its legs injured, the beast fell towards the ground.

“Let’s go, Daisaku!”

“Yeah!”

Sortie

Finally was Red and Yellow. Yellow acted as a step and threw Red high up into the air. After flipping once through the air, Red held his sword in both hands. Below him was the point where the beast had collapsed.

“This is the end!”

Red brought down his sword onto the head of the beast that was struggling to get up. As he did, electricity was discharged just like Blue’s bullets. Suffering from both the sword’s strike and electricity, the magically strengthened beast lost its consciousness.

Part 5

The four beasts were defeated a few minutes after Shizuka had sensed their presence. All four had lost consciousness and laid collapsed on the ground.

“Devil Princess-san, I know how this might sound but… was it really okay to not kill them?”

Though they were originally dogs, they were now modified weapons. Once they regained consciousness they would probably still be hostile, and they must be miserable, living as weapons. The Sun Rangers point was quite justifiable.

“They’re unfortunate dogs… but strategic convenience wins out this time. Though they might not be intelligent enough to contact their owners on a regular basis, they’ve probably been made to let them know of their deaths.”

Theia had avoided killing the dogs because she was thinking ahead. Her intuition told her that they shouldn’t kill the dogs. If the dogs died then there would be an absence of guards. In that case, there might be a mechanism to let the owners know if that happened. Theia’s and the others goal was just to reach the secret base, and for that purpose, risks needed to be kept at a minimum.

“I see… that does seem like a possibility.”

The Sun Rangers seemed convinced, but Ruth who was listening nearby wasn’t. She smiled and spoke to Theia.

“Your highness, you can admit that it’s just because you felt sorry for them.”

“I don’t really…”

“Really?”

“…I-It’s because I felt sorry for them.”

Theia had another reason for not killing the dogs other than the strategical one, and with two reasons there was no reason to go out of their way to kill the dogs.

“Satomi-kun would surely praise you.”

“Yeah, Satomi-kun looks like he likes be— animals.”

“W-Well, I guess everything worked out alright… That’s right, Maki. Could you keep them asleep for a while?”

If the beasts woke up they would very likely become a threat again. That’s why Theia wanted to keep them asleep until the battle was over.

“For better or for worse, that’s the kind of magic I specialize in.”

Maki was a magician who focused on mind manipulating indigo magic. Causing someone to fall asleep was her specialty. But the current Maki felt somewhat saddened by that. Maki having a wry smile as she nodded couldn’t be avoided.

“That would really help. Please do so right away.”

“…As you wish, princess.”

Theia’s bright smile felt reassuring as it was like Theia was saying that Maki was fine the way she was.

Maguz's Identity

Part 1

Sunday, July 4

As Koutarou and the others were running through the old district to meet up with their allies several explosions happened in the new district. For each explosion the fire got worse, lighting up the city even more than the lights in the windows. If they strained their ears they could also hear something sounding like gunshots every now and then. Sensing how fierce the battle must be, the party grew tenser.

"What is the meaning of this, Maguz…?"

Kiriha mortifyingly bit her lip.

The radical faction had demanded that the conservative faction surrendered by threatening to use the earthquake weapon, so at the very least they shouldn't be attacking until the conservative faction has responded. Yet, the battle had begun before an answer was given. They didn't know the reason, but it was clear that Kiriha and the others were being led by the nose by the radical faction's leader, Maguz.

"Calm down, Kiriha-san."

Koutarou said as he placed his hand on Kiriha's shoulder. He was calm and composed.

"In large-scale battles, unexpected events will happen. The commander's job is to adapt to that and make adjustments to the plan. Not make sure the battle follows your plan."

Amongst the underground troops, only Koutarou had experience with large battles. He hadn't taken part in modern wars, but while weapons and strategies changed, the commander's attitude didn't. As a result, Koutarou calmly reacted to the situation.

"…Thank you, Koutarou."

Upon hearing Koutarou's words, Kiriha took a deep breath. Showing a small smile, she held onto Koutarou's hand resting on her shoulder.

"I'm glad you are with me."

"Everyone's like that at first. Me too. Besides, having you rely on me is not a bad feeling at all."

While Koutarou nodded back to Kiriha he was thinking about something else.

If anything, the radical faction are the dangerous ones…

The radical faction lacked experience in war as well. Having hidden underground for hundreds of years, they haven't done battle for at least that long. While they might have experience with using weapons through skirmishes, there was no one that knew what would happen when an army faced another army.

That's why no matter how much the radical faction acted like warriors, and spoke of honor and justice, it was all just theoretical. While they might believe they understand war from watching footage and reading documents, they don't actually understand anything. It was a war between novices. The radical faction was getting excited from their war game.

That's what Koutarou feared. In a war like that, they couldn't pull their punches like a fight between children. If they took action, Koutarou felt like they might even do something that can't be undone without hesitation. In truth, they had created an earthquake weapon.

"But Kiriha-san… in order to end this battle, you'll need a considerable resolution."

"I know. No… I believe I understand."

Kiriha nodded. She was well aware of how dangerous the radical faction was. And that control of the situation might be slipping out of her hands.

"That's why…"

Kiriha stopped speaking there. She couldn't show any further weakness in front of her subordinates. In return, she strongly squeezed Koutarou's hand.

"…"

Koutarou couldn't say anything. But her feelings conveyed to him, and he squeezed her hand back just as hard.

Maguz's Identity

Part 2

The guard house where Kiriha and the others would meet up with their allies was a small building built several decades ago. By the time the old district was abandoned, its walls still had a beautiful white color, but now it had turned into a reddish-brown from dirt and dust. There were cracks in the concrete and windows, clearly showing how much time had passed. While it hadn't deteriorated as much as an equivalent building on the surface would from the wind and rain, it still fit the description of an abandoned building.

"A-Are you fine with this, Sakuraba-senpai?"

"Fine with what?"

"The insects! There's a bunch of insects inside this building!"

"Ah… well, the insects coming straight at me are scary, but other than that…"

"I hate the crawly ones and the ones with lots of legs!"

"Like this one?"

"Kyaaaaa! Satomi-san, Satomi-san, save me!"

"Sanae, play with Yurika later, now's not a good time."

"Okay."

As Koutarou and the others entered the building they found the contact representatives from the conservative faction already waiting for them.

"Kiriha-sama!"

Upon spotting Kiriha, they ran up to her. Their job was to report the underground situation to Kiriha and tell the main force what Kiriha and the others will be doing.

"Thank you for your trouble. How's the situation?"

Keeping the greetings brief, Kiriha urged them to report as they were short on time. There, the leader of the group stepped up to report.

"About that. The radical faction has raided our base. It seems like they got impatient waiting for our answer to their demand of surrender…"

The contact representative debriefed Kiriha on the situation.

Yesterday, the radical faction revealed the existence of their earthquake weapon, and demanded that the conservative faction surrendered. If they surrendered, the radical faction would attack the surface in high spirits, as a result, they could not choose surrender. The conservative faction had reached a consensus that attacking the surface would eventually lead the People of the Earth to ruin. There, the conservative faction replied that they would examine the question further in an attempt to buy time. If they rejected, the radical faction might use their earthquake weapon, or they might seize control of the conservative faction through military force. The conservative faction had to complete their preparations before that happened.

However, they were not given that much time. Either the radical faction got impatient or they realized that the conservative faction had no intention to surrender. Regardless of reason, once 24 hours passed, the radical faction attacked the conservative faction's base.

They attacked the executive branch and the legislature, the army base and the offices and homes of those influential in the conservative faction.

The attackers were armed radicals, and a part of the army under the radical faction's control. While it may be small scale, it was without a doubt a military coup.

Maguz's Identity

The attack began as a surprise attack, which allowed the numerically inferior radical faction to overwhelm the conservative faction. With the attack, the conservative faction's chain of command was cut off and forced the troops to act individually, which meant they couldn't make use of their numbers. On top of that, the radical faction was using weapons that the conservative faction had never seen before, and the overall combat power of each individual radical faction soldier was higher than each individual conservative faction soldier. At this rate the conservative faction would be dismantled, they had to regain control of the situation or defeat was inevitable.

Fortunately many of the influential people had managed to escape. Not even the conservative faction would move ahead without plans when their surrender was being demanded. They were currently moving to hiding places prepared in case of emergencies in order to regain control. If things went well, the tides might even turn.

Once the contact representative finished their report, Harumi who had been quietly listening tilted her head and pulled on Koutarou's sleeve. She was curious about the difference in what the radical faction was saying and what they were doing.

"Satomi-kun, why did the radical faction go ahead and attack? They even threatened that they would use the earthquake weapon if they didn't surrender."

"I can think of two reasons."

Koutarou raised two fingers and showed Harumi.

"The first is that they might not be able to use the earthquake weapon yet. However, that isn't very realistic."

"Why is that?"

"If it wasn't they wouldn't bother giving Kiriha-san that information. It would only be when it's complete or close to it that they would inform Kiriha-san."

If the earthquake weapon, Earth Dragon, was incomplete, there wouldn't be any point in informing Kiriha as the risk of them being attacked would increase. It wasn't until the weapon was complete or close to it that it would function as a threat.

"I see… then what about the second reason?"

"If they use the earthquake weapon they'll be unable to use the underground's manpower and production facilities. The radical faction must want to be able to make use of those if possible."

During the war in the past Forthorthe Koutarou had experienced that from time to time. Involving a village or town in a battle would cause a loss even if you won. It was common sense for a competent commander to avoid such loss.

As expected, leaving his minion Tayuma aside, we should be cautious of the mastermind, Maguz. Maguz is thinking ahead…

If that was the reason as to why the earthquake weapon wasn't being used, then combined with the magical weapon Yurika had brought with her, the utmost care is needed to be taken when dealing with Maguz.

"Which means, wouldn't this situation be bad?"

"What do you mean with bad?"

"If the evil underground people start to lose this fight, won't they cause an earthquake?"

"Ah."

Yurika's eyes opened wide. Sanae was right.

Maguz's Identity

The radical faction was currently winning, and they're not using the earthquake weapon as there's a chance they can make use of the production facilities and manpower. But if the conservative faction were to regain control and started pushing the radical faction back, that might no longer be the case. By that point they might revert to their original goal of invading the surface and use the earthquake weapon to lay ruin to the underground. If they couldn't win, production facilities and manpower meant nothing.

Kiriha replied to Sanae's doubts. She had already found the answer.

"In other words, everything relies on our underground troops and Theia-dono's surface troops. We must suppress the radical faction's base while Theia-dono and the others destroy the earthquake weapon, Earth Dragon, at the same time. And as quickly as possible at that. That is our only remaining chance of victory."

The radical faction still wasn't aware of the existence of Kiriha and the others. That's why they might be able to launch a surprise attack on their base. By doing that, the battle underground would reach its conclusion, and if Theia and the others destroyed Earth Dragon at the same time, they could avoid a tragedy.

"The problem is how we find the radical faction's base but—"

"There's no need to worry Kii. I have already located the transmitter."

Clan's voice came from Koutarou's bracelet. Koutarou had activated the comms to let her listen in on this conversation as well.

"Onee-chan…"

"I promised you right? That I would let you win."

Koutarou operated his bracelet and revealed a hologram of Clan. Her expression at the time was fit for a princess, it was a prideful and powerful expression.

Maguz's Identity

Part 3

After getting the coordinates from Clan, Kiriha took action right away. She told the contact representatives the details of her plans and left a message for the conservative leaders that they should refrain from swiftly winning once they regain control of the main forces. She then took her 20 subordinates, and Koutarou and the others with her and headed towards the coordinates she had gotten.

"That's a gloomy face you've got there Kii. Is there something on your mind?"

"Onee-chan, to what extent does the margin error for these coordinates reach?"

Kiriha whispered to the comms device connected to Clan. She didn't want her subordinates to hear so she spoke so that only Clan and Koutarou could hear.

"Well, they are jamming on their end so the analysis isn't that accurate… at most it's plus minus 15 meters."

"15 meters…"

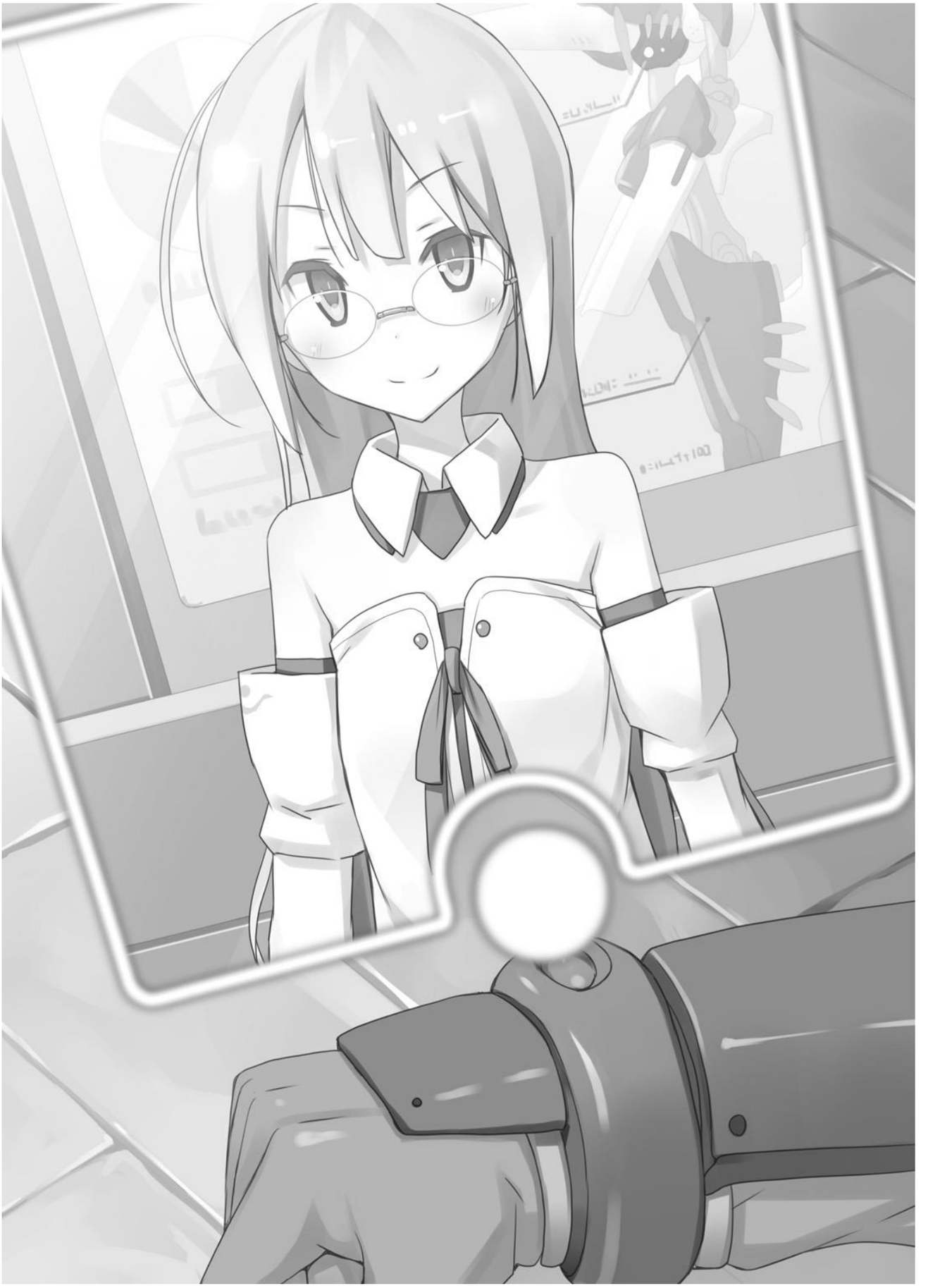
"Is that a problem?"

"Actually… a retainer that has served my family for ages lives in the coordinates you gave us. It's someone you and Onii-chan have met before."

"Could it be that old man from back then?"

Koutarou joined the conversation. He was standing a bit away from Kiriha but the comms were connected to him as well.

Maguz's Identity



Maguz's Identity

"Yeah…"

Kiriha nodded lightly.

The 'old man from back then' as Koutarou put it was the elderly man that had come to the surface when Kiriha had ran away from home.

Kasumi Kouma.

The Kasumi family had served the Kurano family for many generations. Kouma was not exempt from that, and he had served as Daiha's attendant for many years. He had served as Kiriha's guardian eleven years ago when she had lost her mother, but once she grew up he returned to his former position. He also had many children and a splendid successor by the name of Raiga. It was said that eventually Raiga would serve as Kiriha's attendant.

Kiriha couldn't imagine that Kouma would wish for the surface to be ruined. She could confidently say that he was the most loyal of subjects.

"Clan, didn't you just miscalculate?"

"I wish that was the case…"

Koutarou and Clan both understood how Kiriha felt. They didn't want to believe that the gentle old man they had met back then was plotting behind everyone's back. However, Clan's analysis of the transmitter said that the trailer was parked by Kouma's home. And if Kouma was working with the radical faction it would explain why they had been unable to find any leads on Maguz. If information was leaking from Daiha's aide, it was only obvious that the radical faction would stay one step ahead.

"I wish it was just some kind of mistake…"

Kiriha bit her lip. She was in a tough position as one of the people she trusted the most told her to doubt another of the people she trusted the most.

"It's still not certain yet. Let's hurry so we can confirm it."

"Yeah. Sorry for making you worry Onii-chan, Onee-chan."

"We don't mind. It's just between us, right, Bertorion?"

"Yeah, of course."

"Thank you… both of you…"

"It's about time for the commander to return."

"Yeah!"

Kiriha wiped away her tears and raised her head. Kouma's home was right around the corner.

Maguz's Identity

Part 4

As the Kasumi family was a distinguished family that had served the Kurano family for many generations, their gate was large. The large, traditional Japanese-style gate welcomed Koutarou and the others who were rushing towards it. Strictly speaking, the gate didn't compare to the Higashihongan family's gate. But since they were underground things simply ended up becoming smaller. The status of the family was certainly not inferior to the Higashihongan family.

"I just hope someone is still here… Excuse me!"

Kiriha knocked on the gate with a stern expression. Her anxiety could still be seen however as she was facing a very difficult phase.

"…Yes, do you have some business— Kiriha-sama!?"

A male employee of the Kasumi family peeked through a small window. Since this was a pressing time he seemed quite timid. But upon confirming that it was Kiriha, he hurriedly opened the gate. Since Kouma had served as Kiriha's guardian, the relationship between Kiriha and the members of the Kasumi family ran deep.

"Is uncle… is Kouma at home?"

"The master just returned. However, he has said that he will leave right away."

Fortunately, Kouma was at home. When the radical faction had launched their surprise attack, Kouma had been at the legislature. He escaped from there and moved to a safehouse, but on his way there he stopped by his home. And through sheer chance, Kiriha happened to catch him in.

"My lady!?"

That was when Kouma himself appeared from the mansion. A large bag was hanging down from his shoulder, filled with important documents. Kouma had braved the risks of returning home so he could take these documents with him.

He's gotten a little older, but it's the old man from back then…

Koutarou had seen the man before. Like Kiriha had said, he was the elderly man that they had met eleven years ago. While Koutarou was surprised by that, Kiriha ran up to him.

"Uncle!"

Kiriha ran towards Kouma, and Kouma did the same. The two faced each other just past the inside of the gate and Koutarou and the others soon approached.

"Why are you here!? No, more importantly, it's dangerous here! Let's escape together!"

"Uncle, I have something important to talk about. That's why I'm here."

Kiriha skipped the greetings and moved directly onto the main topic. Kouma was an influential person in the conservative faction. Since he had been at the legislature his home hadn't been attacked, but if the radical faction found out about it, they would surely come. And then there was the more unthinkable reason that Kouma might have connections with the radical faction. There was no time to spare either way.

"Something important? Is that more important than escaping from here?"

"That's right."

Kiriha nodded with her stern expression. Sensing that, Kouma's expression naturally grew sterner as well. The two had been together for so long that they could understand each other's feelings right away.

Maguz's Identity

"Uncle, we are currently looking for the radical faction's base. There's no way to stop this battle other than to strike at the heart of the radical faction."

Kiriha's voice was firm. The reason for that was because she wished for it to all be a mistake.

"I understand the circumstances, but… why are you at my home?"

Kouma inclined his head in confusion. Koutarou couldn't sense that he was lying or acting unnatural. If he was acting, he was quite the actor.

"…We attached transmitters to the five trailers in the radical faction's weapon factory. And one of them points to this place."

As Kiriha said that she stared at Kouma's expression so she could read what went on behind it.

"What!? So my lady, you're saying that I'm working with the radical faction!?"

Kouma's suddenly enraged. His face turned red as he appealed to Kiriha.

"That's not it! There's a chance that this is all one of the radical faction's plans!"

Upon seeing Kouma's reaction, Kiriha gradually grew more convinced. Kouma really was just Kouma. He wasn't part of the radical faction. But even then she had to make sure of it.

"That's not it, but it's the truth that the transmitter's signal is coming from this place! Please let us search the mansion, Kouma! This is our only lead!"

Before knocking on the Kasumi family gate they had confirmed that the signal really was coming from the mansion. Regardless of the reason, if the checked out that source they might find a clue that could lead them to the radical faction's base. Though she believed in Kouma she couldn't back down.

"I understand. This Kouma has nothing to hide from my lady. If you say it will help in the battle against the radical faction then search to your hearts content."

Kouma gave his okay right away. He didn't seem shaken up in the slightest. To Koutarou the elderly man only looked like a loyal subject displaying his innocence.

Having gotten Kouma's approval, the party quickly began searching for the transmitter. The one in charge of searching for it was Clan. Koutarou and the others followed her directions and moved towards Kouma's garden.

"Kii, please continue straight forward. The transmitter's signal is coming from 70 meters up ahead."

"So that's it… I've found a building that seems to fit the bill."

"Be careful, Kii. The radical faction might be lurking around."

"Thank you."

In the garden behind the house were several large warehouses. Clan was guiding Kiriha to one of those warehouses.

"It seems like this is the place. Kouma, could you open it up?"

Standing in front of the warehouse in question, Kiriha looked up at it. Like the mansion, it was built in the same traditional Japanese-style, and was several dozen meters large. It was large enough to conceal the trailer in question without any problems.

"My lady, are you sure this is it?"

Having come up to the warehouse, the calm Kouma's expression started clouding up.

"It seems like it. Is there a problem?"

Maguz's Identity

"No…"

With his expression still clouded, Kouma stepped up next to Kiriha and put his hand on the door in order to unlock it. The building was old, but the lock was computer controlled. Kouma input the password like in a familiar fashion.

"The password is incorrect."

"Oh?"

However, the door didn't open despite Kouma entering the password. The panel beeped and displayed that the password was incorrect.

"That's strange…"

Kouma attempted to enter the password again, but the results were the same.

"What's wrong?"

"Well my lady… it seems that the password has been changed."

"The password has?"

"I haven't heard about this…"

Since family heirloom and the likes were placed in the warehouses, so Kouma would receive a report if the password was changed. Yet it had been, it was an impossible situation.

"Could this be…?"

"What is it, Kouma?"

"No… since it's come to this, let's destroy the door."

"Uncle, you don't have to do that. I'll open it from the inside."

Quick to the punch, Sanae split into Sanae-chan and Sanae-san. She was going to open the door in her ghost form. Seeing her appearance, Kouma's eyes opened wide.

"Just what is…?"

"Or do you need a password from the inside too?"

"N-No, you can open it from the inside normally."

"I see. Then wait, I'll get it open right away."

"Be careful, Sanae-chan."

"I'm fine, I'm fine. Well I'm off."

Sanae-chan passed through the door as Sanae-san worriedly saw her off.

A few seconds later the sound of the door's lock being undone could be heard. Sanae-chan's face peeked through the door and she beckoned the others over with a smile.

"Okay, everyone come in."

"Thank you, Sanae… Then let's go."

Kiriha thanked Sanae and took the lead as she opened the door. So the party entered the warehouse in question.

The inside of the warehouse was dark and it wasn't possible to see anything. However Kouma flipped a switch on a nearby wall to light up the old lamps in the warehouse. That was when Koutarou and the others could finally see what was inside.

Maguz's Identity

Like the outside, the inside was of a traditional Japanese-style. With the light, the entire warehouse gave off a warm impression. However, something that contradicted such warmth was at the center of the warehouse. It was that trailer that Koutarou and the others had seen in the radical faction's factory.

"Satomi-kun, this is that trailer, isn't it!?"

"Yeah, there's no mistaking it."

Since Harumi and Koutarou had seen it in person at the factory they could tell right away. Especially since Koutarou had seen it up close. Koutarou approached the trailer and removed the transmitter that had been attached under the main body. It was proof that this was indeed the trailer.

"It's the transmitter I attached. Then it's certain."

"But… how can!"

Kouma panickingly ran up to the trailer and opened the trailer's container. The moment he saw what was inside he greatly shook his head and rejected it.

"Impossible, this can not be! It's a lie. Tell me it's a lie!"

The majority of the contents had already been carried away. However, since some of it still remained, one could imagine who the owner was. What was left were firearms, armor, tactical vehicles and the like. It was the same equipment the radical faction was using against the conservative faction at this very moment.

"…I-If this is here then… if this is here then…"

Kouma sat down on the spot and began shedding tears. He wasn't shedding tears because his connection with the radical faction had been revealed. He didn't have any connection with them. Instead, if this trailer was in this warehouse it pointed to someone else having connections to the radical faction. And that fact was unbearably sad for Kouma.

"…Raiga… why did you… didn't we both swear… to serve the Kurano family… why would you… join the likes of the radical faction…"

Kasumi Raiga. A smart and considerate man, loved by those around him, and was expected to become the Kasumi family's successor. He was Kouma's pride and joy. The radical faction's trailer had been brought into his personal warehouse.

Maguz's Identity

Part 5

Assuming that Kasumi Raiga was part of the radical faction would answer some questions. Such as why the conservative faction couldn't find any leads to the radical faction, or why the password to the warehouse had been secretly changed. If Raiga was leaking information there was no way that the radical faction would slip up easily. And since it was his personal warehouse, changing the password was easy. There were also many more questions that would be answered under this assumption. That's why Raiga's involvement was almost certain. All that was left was how deeply involved he was.

"Uncle, cheer up. It's still not certain that Raiga is part of the radical faction. He might be forced to cooperate under threat."

"…I just hope… that is the case…"

Even if Raiga had a connection to the radical faction there was a considerate difference between being threatened or joining through his own free will. In order to get more details, Kiriha and the others were headed towards Raiga's private room inside of the mansion. They were going to look for information regarding the radical faction there.

"…I feel bad for him."

Yurika mumbled as she stared at Kouma's back. Harumi who was next to her nodded. Being very sympathetic, tears were forming in her eyes.

"…Just how painful would it be… to learn that your own family might be an enemy…"

Imagining her own parents becoming her enemies, Harumi couldn't bear it.

"But, Koutarou. That's not his fault is it?"

Sanae also felt sorry for Kouma, but that was more because she felt sorry that the parent was blamed for their, now adult, son being reckless. It was a very simple concept that fit Sanae.

"I imagine it wouldn't be that simple when it comes to your own child. But I bet it's hard for us to imagine as we're still children."

"Hmm…"

Sanae crossed her arms and began thinking. It was a problem that was quick and easy to accept. That was where Sanae-san called out to Sanae-chan. Sanae-san had a different way of thinking about it.

"Uhm, Sanae-chan. If Koutarou-san was suddenly revealed to be an enemy one day, how would you feel?"

"How… that would never happen."

There was absolutely no way that Koutarou would ever become Sanae's enemy. That had become common sense to Sanae-chan. If he was ever to become a bad guy, so would Sanae.

"But that's just what happened to uncle Kouma."

"…I kinda feel like I understand."

To Sanae, being left behind was more problematic than Koutarou suddenly becoming a bad guy. Thinking that something like that had happened to Kouma was easier for Sanae-chan to understand.

Having understood, Sanae-chan merged with Sanae-san and held Koutarou's hand.

"What's wrong?"

"Koutarou… if you ever become a bad guy… then make sure you take us with you."

Maguz's Identity

Sanae tightly squeezed Koutarou's hand.

"Okay. When that time comes I will."

Koutarou nodded and squeezed the worried Sanae's hand back.

Maguz's Identity

Part 6

It had been a while since Kouma last visited his son's, Raiga's, room. He had been busy dealing with the radical faction, and when needed Raiga would come to his room instead. As a result, there was never a need for Kouma to visit Raiga's room.

"…Just when did Raiga grow up so big…"

Kouma picked up a photograph of a younger self and a small boy. That was how Raiga had looked 20 years ago. He was currently over 30 years of age, but to Kouma, that image of a young boy had never left him. Because of that he would sometimes inadvertently make Raiga angry as he treated him like a child. But now even those were good memories.

"…I guess he's grown up to become an independent adult…"

He was sure that he knew everything there was to Raiga when he was young. But now that confidence was waning. Inside of his son was something like a fog that he couldn't see past. And that made Kouma uneasy and sad.

"Uncle… Raiga is still your child. You can believe in him."

"Thank you, my lady…"

Kouma wiped away his tears and returned the photograph to its former place. After that, Kouma looked around the room. He found mostly tools for work, but he could see some items of remembrance mixed in. Like the game board they had played together, his sports uniform or the book he had read to him. Since Kouma had lost his wife early on, he had given his all to spend as much time with his son as possible. These memories filled this room. That's why when he stood here, he simply couldn't believe it. That Raiga was related to the radical faction. He couldn't help but pray that Raiga was at most being threatened and forced to cooperate. The young boy in Kouma's mind was still showing his innocent smile.

"Let's believe in Raiga, Uncle… I'm sure he will answer your expectations."

"My lady… yes…"

Kouma nodded and sat down on the sofa that Kiriha had led him to. Kiriha had to search for clues, but she couldn't leave the depressed Kouma be.

"…Uncle Kouma…"

Sanae stared at Kouma and Kiriha.

"Alright, I'll do my best!"

Kouma wanted to prove his son's innocence. Having understood that, Sanae was more enthusiastic than normal. Normally she would claim that looking for things are too much of a bother, but unusually enough, she took the lead to search for clues.

"Yurika, can't you do something with your magic?"

"Do something, like what?"

"If he's being threatened couldn't there be something like a hidden camera or microphone? I'm asking if you can find something like that with magic."

"I see… you're awfully clever today, Sanae-chan."

"I'm a captain after all. So, can you do it or not?"

"I'll give it a try. I believe I can find out if I follow the flow of electricity."

"I'll leave it to you private."

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At first Sanae wasn't very interested in proving Raiga's innocence, but now she was really getting into it. By understanding Kouma's feelings, Sanae's matured a little more.

Looking at Sanae like that, Harumi smiled.

"Satomi-kun, we can't lose either."

"You're right, let's give it our all."

"But… rather than aimlessly searching for clues, we should narrow down what we're looking for like Higashihongan-san and Nijino-san."

Raiga's room was large, since he was helping Kouma with his work, he had a lot of documents regarding the politics and history of the People of the Earth. So it was clear that it would be a waste of time searching through everything one item at a time, even with 20 something people.

Sanae and Yurika are working under the assumption that he is being threatened. In that case, we should…

Koutarou decided to work on the opposite assumption of Sanae and Yurika. In other words, he would search for clues on the assumption that Raiga was voluntarily working with the radical faction. Sadly this was something that had to be done, but not something he wanted to push onto Sanae or Kiriha. So Koutarou believed it would be best if he and Harumi did it. Truth be told he didn't want to involve Harumi in something that required her to suspect others, but there was a limit to what he could do on his own.

"…Senpai, we should look for clues using the opposite method as Sanae and Yurika."

Koutarou whispered to Harumi. He didn't want others to hear.

"…You mean we should look for clues that Raiga-san is voluntarily cooperating with the radical faction?"

"…Yes. It's not something I'd like to do, but… please lend me your help, Sakuraba-senpai."

"…I understand. It's something someone has to do."

When Harumi showed a sad smile she looked like a different girl to Koutarou. It was a girl with silver hair and blue eyes. But that was for just a moment. The silvery sheen vanished and she returned to her original appearance. Koutarou was taken aback by that for a moment, but quickly recollected himself.

"…Sakuraba-senpai, I'll examine the history books. The radical faction should have some interest in that."

"…Then I'll take a look at the accounting books. If he's working with the radical faction in secret, there should be some kind of deception in it."

Koutarou and Harumi split up to look for clues. The two hoped for the same thing. That there wouldn't be any clues that Raiga was an enemy. They only hoped to find clues that lead to the radical faction's base. And it wasn't just the two of them. Everyone in the room wished for the same thing.

Several tens of minutes after the group had split up to search Raiga's room, a contact representative from the conservative faction jumped into the room.

"Kiriha-sama!"

"What is it?"

Leaving the searching to Koutarou and the others, Kiriha approached the contact representative. There, the representative ran up to Kiriha and whispered in a quiet voice so only she could hear. The moment she heard what the representative had to say, her expression changed.

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"Aaaaaaahh!?"

But at almost the same time, Sanae let out a loud voice, so there was nobody to notice her change in expression. Everyone naturally turned to look at Sanae.

"Koutarou, Koutarou, look! I found a weird button!"

"What!?"

Sanae picked up a thick book and opened it to show to Koutarou. Inside was a small box made out of plastic.

Sanae had found a button hidden within the book. Since it had been concealed by hollowing out a book there was no way of knowing the button was there until you opened the book. In her quest for hidden cameras and microphones, Sanae happened to pick up the book by chance.

"…I don't know anything about this… Raiga, are you really…"

Kouma unsteadily approached Sanae and grabbed the book, and with a trembling hand he pushed the button. With a click the button starting glowing red.

Then the bookshelves moved to the side. Since they were moving full of books, it was a very heavy sound. Once moved, a large safe could be found built into the wall behind the bookshelves.

"Sanae, can you open it?"

"I think this one is impossible."

The safe had been locked through a mechanism, and Koutarou hoped that Sanae could open it the same way she had with the warehouse door, but she shook her head. There was no way to open the safe from the other side, and it was a lock Sanae couldn't do anything about it.

"Then I'll do it."

Instead, Yurika rose her hand and walked up next to Koutarou. She spoke in the same tone as always, but a strong light resided in her eyes. They were the eyes of a magical girl.

"Can you do it?"

"I think it will work if we dissolve the area around the lock with acid."

Saying that, Yurika held her cane, Angel Halo, in both hands. Seeing her appearance full of confidence, Koutarou moved away from the safe to open up room for Yurika.

"Then please do it."

"Yes! …Acid Splash."

Yurika pointed her cane towards the safe's lock and spoke a very brief incantation. It was a basic spell that created and launched a strongly acidic liquid.

Since it was a basic spell, the liquid only remained acidic for a short period of time. However, it was enough to destroy the lock's mechanism, and since the acidity ran out, the other parts were left untouched. Yurika had chosen an appropriate spell.

"It's open."

The acid melted away the lock surprisingly quickly. As a result, the safe was half opened and its contents could be seen through the gap. Inside of the safe were some kind of documents.

"Kiriha-san."

"Yeah…"

Maguz's Identity

Kiriha moved in front of the safe. Picking up one of the documents, her eyes opened up wide. It was a large map with many signs and characters written all over it.

"…Phew… sadly, the worst possible situation is progressing…"

That map was part of a plan for a military invasion of the surface.

Maguz's Identity

Part 7

Apart from the invasion plans, there was sensitive information from the conservative faction hidden within the safe. A person being threatened wouldn't go out of their way to build a safe, and in that scenario it was also hard to believe that he would be in a position to come into contact with the radical faction's strategist. Thinking about it normally, it seemed like Raiga was stealing conservative faction secrets from under Kouma's nose and using them to form plans. In other words, it was very likely that Raiga was voluntarily cooperating with the radical faction, and that he was in a very high position at that.

"Clan, the situation's bad."

"What's the matter?"

"It seems like the son of the Chief's aide is working with the radical faction. There's most likely many more inside the conservative faction."

"Which means we'll have to do this alone. And quickly."

"Yeah. Where are Theia and the others right now?"

"From their report just a while ago, they would soon arrive at the decided point."

"When they reach it let me know right away."

"I understand."

Koutarou showed a bitter expression after his talk with Clan. The situation was exceptionally bad. The radical faction held the advantage in battle, and the conservative faction couldn't fight back seriously until the earthquake weapon was dealt with. And with Kouma's son working with the radical faction, there was most likely many more accomplices within the conservative faction. Because of that they couldn't work together with the conservative faction to find the radical faction's base. If the conservative faction made any moves the radical faction would quickly find out about it.

"Satomi-kun, what do we do now?"

"Well… let's start by examining the strategy plans, we might be able to derive the radical faction's base from them."

The strategy plans included plans for the battle occurring right now. For a logical plan where soldiers could be swiftly deployed, the locations of the enemy base could be narrow down. Hope still existed.

"Kiriha is good at that kind of thing after all."

"All that's left is a race against time…"

Even after narrowing down the spots, it wasn't certain how much time it would take before it was found. Luck would play a big part in it.

"Yurika, could you call over Kiriha-san?"

Kiriha had left the room to escort the greatly shocked Kouma to his own room. She needed to return right around now.

"Okay!"

Yurika put away the documents she was looking at and accepted with a smile. She was starting to get a headache from looking at all the numbers and symbols, so she welcomed the change in work and she jumped out of a Raiga's room while humming.

"Satomi-sa~n! Bad news!"

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Yurika returned a few minutes later, but her expression was the opposite of the one she had left with.

"Kiriha-san is not here!"

The reason was revealed right after, Yurika couldn't find Kiriha. In this situation, that was a major problem that could have fatal consequences.

"She's not here? Yurika, explain it properly!"

"I don't really understand either! But the people of the house said that they saw Kiriha-san go outside a little while ago!"

"Why would she…?"

Koutarou had no ideas as to why Kiriha would vanish. He couldn't imagine that there was a need for it. If anything it was the opposite, as now was when Kiriha's knowledge was needed. Doubts and impatience came over Koutarou.

"Everybody… may I have your ears for a moment?"

That was when Kouma who was following Yurika entered the room. While his depression from learning of his son's involvement was large, he was the man who had served as the Chief's right arm. He had switched gears in order to play his own role.

"…I see, you do indeed look familiar… how strange…"

"Kouma-san?"

Kouma stood in front of Koutarou and looked over him, yet that was just for a moment. He soon moved onto the main topic.

"My lady, Kiriha-sama, has left for the radical faction's base."

"What!?"

Koutarou's eyes shot wide open. Going into the radical faction's base on her own was nothing short of suicide. Besides, Koutarou and the others were having a hard time even finding out where said base was.

"Using Daiha-sama's life as a shield, they asked for Kiriha-sama to make an appearance."

"Preposterous! Why didn't you stop her!?"

"I tried many times. However, Kiriha-sama said this was the only way…"

"But…"

Koutarou grinded his teeth in frustration. Knowing her personality she would appear, knowing full well the danger she would be in. That was the kind of girl she was.

"Koutarou-sama, I have received something from my lady."

As Kouma spoke he pulled something out from his pocket and presented it to Koutarou. It was a silver colored card that had lost it's sheen.

"This is…"

"My lady told me to return this to you. And she left a message, 'I will leave the rest to you.'"

This was the card that Koutarou had given to Kiriha eleven years ago. He was very well aware of how much Kiriha treasured this card. Yet she had given it back to him, and Koutarou knew just what that meant.

"…Kiriha-san is prepared to die…"

Maguz's Identity

Kiriha had resolved herself to die before she headed towards the enemy base. That's why she returned the card she treasured more than her life to Koutarou. That was the safest way of protecting it.

The Invaders' Battlefields

Part 1

Sunday, July 4

Theia and the surface troops got into position 15 minutes after Kiriha had vanished underground. They had sneaked up to the northern part of the island, near the radical faction's base, and were observing it.

"…It's smaller than I thought."

That was Shizuka's first impression upon seeing it. The base surrounded by a steel fence was larger than Corona House, but far smaller than Kitsushouharukaze high school. Shizuka's image of a base was something gigantic like you'd see in the movies, so this was kind of a let down. As it was night, lights were lighting up the base, giving it a lonely impression and making it look even smaller.

"Shizuka-sama, that is just the entrance. Most of it is built underground so that it won't stand out."

Ruth smiled and showed Shizuka a hologram on her bracelet. It was an estimated 3D model of the base that Ruth and Clan had built up through analyzing the information they had gathered. This showed that the top part was just the tip of the iceberg and the remaining 90% of the base was underground.

"I see, it's a secret base after all."

Since it was base where a weapon of mass destruction had been set up, it was build to stand out as little as possible. Taking observation satellites into consideration, it was only inevitable that the majority of the base would be built underground. Since aircraft or other vehicles weren't intended to be used at the base, there was no inconvenience in it.

"Things won't go as they have up until now. Men, are you prepared?"

Theia and the others would be raiding this base and destroying the earthquake weapon, Earth Dragon that should be inside. They had avoided contact with the enemy until now, but that wouldn't work any more. They had to defeat the enemies in their way and complete their objective.

"I'm ready at any time. I'm ready to fight. Even if I'm going up against Maya-sama."

Maki strongly grasped her cane and nodded. Since the moment she had landed on this island she had prepared herself for a battle against her master, Maya. There was no sign of hesitation in her eyes. And if she lost against the radical faction's soldiers, there was no way she could win against Maya, so she didn't fear them at all.

"Leave it to me, Theia-chan. I'd rather move my body than anxiously sneak around like this."

Shizuka was already ready to fight. With her invincible body, and the mind of a high school girl, she felt less tense fighting than having to sneak around and worry about the entire plan failing.

"I'm starting to get nervous."

"Calm down, Kotarou. If you're like that, you won't even be able to do something you normally can."

"But you're trembling too, Hayato-niichan."

"Kotarou, Hayato, we're all scared. That's why we fight together. Right?"

"Kenichi is right. Let's focus on doing what we can."

"Yeah. That way the triumphant celebration feast will taste more delicious!"

This battle was different from the small skirmishes the Sun Rangers had been in before. It was a battle that would determine the future of both the surface and the underground, and the Sun Rangers couldn't hide their nervousness. However, they were confronting that trial through the support of each other. That sight gave courage to the conservative faction soldiers who were around them. That was probably the essence of heroes, but the Sun Rangers seemed unaware of it.

Next, reports that preparations were complete came from one squad after another. Confirming that all 89 of them were ready, Theia nodded.

"…We were all born and raised in different places, but we must win this battle no matter what, and that is what ties us together. Let's forget about those differences! It doesn't matter how ungraceful our fight is! We will destroy the Earth Dragon and come out victorious! Men, follow me!" Theia loudly declared, and her 88 allies replied in unison.

""Yeah!""

Aliens, a magical girl, a normal high school girl, a sun squad and the underground people. There were all kinds of people gathered, but they all shared a common goal.

Part 2

Theia made the first attack. Overwhelming the others in scientific power, she was capable of just that. That's why she began her attack as she jumped through the bushes.

"Blue Knight, Multi-Launching Ground to Ground Missiles! Destroy that annoying fence!"

"As you wish, my princess."

According to Theia's orders, two large hexagons appeared slightly behind her shoulders. They were missile launchers, and as they appeared their launch ports opened and fired the missiles within, a total of twelve. First they headed straight up from Theia before curving and heading towards the radical faction's base.

The missiles were targeting the fence around the base and, along with loud booms, the steel fence was blown away, removing the obstacles from Theia's and the others path.

"Ruth!"

"Yes! Deploying Distortion Field!"

Ruth took over as the frontline and widely deployed the barrier built into her armor. She would serve as the shield until they reached the entrance to the base. This was a fitting role for Ruth, who had the title of Guardian Knight.

"Mirror Image – Modifier – Area Effect – End – Effective Area Large!"

Maki's specialization, mind manipulation magic, extended to illusion magic as well. She created copies of all 89 allies and placed those copies around the real one. Doing this made it seem like a much bigger force was attacking, and it also lowered the chances of someone getting attacked. It was a probabilistic way of defending.

"Let's close in before they can recover! Run as fast as you can!"

Following Theia's orders, the surface troops advanced as one. In total there were about ten radical faction soldiers protecting the entrance. They had been thrown into disarray from Theia's missiles, but they wouldn't stay panicked forever. Once they recovered they would call for backup and counter attack. Before that happened, they needed to close the distance.

"Your highness, they're firing!"

About 100 meters away from the base site, small sparks hit Ruth's barrier from time to time. It was the light from bullets striking the barrier. Having recovered, the radical faction soldiers noticed Theia and the others and began their attack. While it wasn't much of a problem right now because of their few numbers, once the backup arrived, that might not be the case. Having judged the situation thusly, Theia gave her next orders.

"Blue Shine, shoot that cable that's coming out from the lookout post!"

"Leave it to me! Kotarou!"

"Got it! Live ammunition loaded, night vision scope activated, distance 180, the wind is north west, wind velocity two meters, humidity is 55%!"

Blue and Green temporarily left the file and entered a sniping position. It may have been because they were using a Forthorthe weapon, but their preparations were swift. Seconds after leaving the file they already had the target in the scope.

"Niichan, that weapon doesn't need corrections so just shoot!"

"Firing!"

The Invaders' Battlefields

The bullet shot left the rifle along with a solemn sound. Since the bullet speed exceeded a velocity of 1000 meters per second, by the time the sound could be heard, the bullet had already hit its target. The bullet didn't stray off target and destroyed the cable coming out of the lookout post.

"Direct hit!"

"Alright! Let's go, Kotarou!"

"Yeah!"

Done with their sniping, the two rapidly stood up and chased after Theia and the others.With that Theia had a satisfied smile and she gave them words of appreciation.

"Well done, Sun Rangers! With this, their reinforcements will be delayed!"

The cable that Theia had them shoot was used for communication. The cable was used both for calling for reinforcements and for sending camera feeds down. With that destroyed, they can slow down the reinforcements as they switched to an emergency line. That time should be enough to let Theia and the others reach the entrance to the base.

"Your highness, I'm detecting metal up ahead! It's a minefield!"

Ruth's computer was giving out warnings. On the outside of where the fence had been were landmines. They covered a distance of about ten meters, which was enough to blow away problematic intruders.

"What a nuisance! Blue Knight, fire the remaining missiles! Create a path for us to take!"

"As you wish, my princess."

The missile launchers, floating behind Theia, fired a large amount of missiles once more. Like before, it was a total of twelve, and they rained down on the minefield.

This caused even grander explosions than before and kicked up a cloud of dust that hid the entrance of the base from sight. The ground shook like it was an earthquake and the blast shook the surrounding trees.

"The course is clear!"

"Men, we're pushing through!"

Theia and the others charged towards the minefield before the cloud of dust and fire had settled down. The shockwave assaulted them, but thanks to Ruth's sturdy barrier they were unharmed. With the minefield blown away there was no longer anything in Theia's and the others path and they were able to successfully enter the base site.

"Theia-chan, they're lying in wait for us!"

But they were still in danger, as Shizuka sensed enemies past the cloud of dust. Having seen Theia's missiles clear the minefield, they lay in wait for them to come from that way.

"Don't worry!"

As Theia shouted that, ten radical faction soldiers appeared past the cloud of dust. They weren't incompetent. Having seen Theia deal with the minefield, they had changed their weapons to grenades and bazookas. Ruth's barrier was powerful, but it couldn't protect against attacks from below or above which was their goal.

"Maki!"

"Flash!"

The next moment Maki, who had been in the rear, unleashed a spell that created an intense flash. Having all been looking at Theia and the others as they approached, the radical faction soldiers all saw this flash and the night vision goggles they were using ceased functioning, leaving the soldiers blinded.

"Now, attack!"

The soldiers' hurriedly removed their night vision goggles, but it was already too late. The soldiers were all shot and lost consciousness.

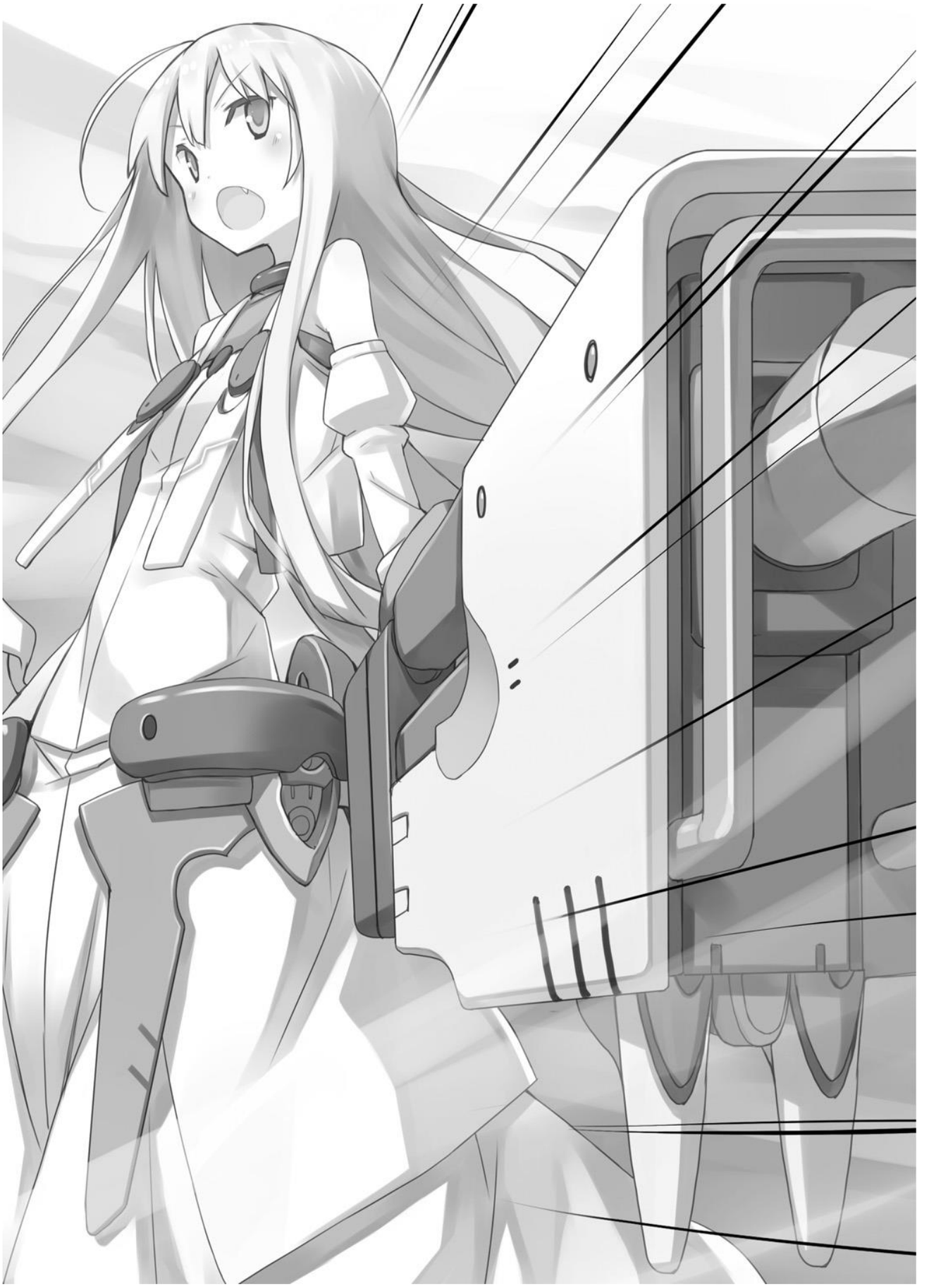
As the troops entered the base they found a tunnel heading underground. The tunnel had a gentle incline and stretched 20 meters wide. The tunnel also had lights set up intermittently, lighting up the entire thing. Assuming that trailers would carry goods to and from here, it was a very appropriate make.

The large weapon on Theia's left arm, the mechanical pile driver, let out lots of exhaust. She had just used the weapon to destroy the entrance gate. Using the weapon at full power created a lot of steam as exhaust, and made Theia give off an even more powerful impression.

"Uhm, Devil Princess-san, wouldn't it be better if we infiltrated the base more quietly as according to plan?"

Overwhelmed by Theia's appearance, Red Shine timidly gave her his opinion. According to their original plan, Theia and the others of the surface troops would be infiltrating the base more slowly and carefully. Since they were entering an unknown base, it was considered best to move forward carefully. However, they had forcefully broken through. While the results were a success, they had already had several dangerous moments.

The Invaders' Battlefields



"I would like to do so as well, but… hearing how the situation underground is going, I can't."

"Is it that bad?"

Blue Shine joined the conversation. Amongst the Sun Rangers, Blue had the most knowledge of the military.

"Indeed. The radical faction lost their patience waiting for an answer and attacked. If we don't destroy the earthquake weapon before the conservative faction get into position for a proper counter attack things will get problematic."

"…That said, the conservative faction can't keep themselves from counter attacking, huh."

"That's right. It seems like we don't have the time to take it slowly."

"Hayato."

"Steel yourself, Kenichi. This is the eleventh hour."

"…Okay. Let's do our best. It does seem like we don't have any time."

Once Blue supported Theia's opinion, Red stopped his objections. He trusted in Blue's decision. Besides, they were already on enemy grounds, doing things casually could prove fatal.

"Men, from this point onward we move in squads. Do not move on your own."

When they were moving they had prioritized everyone moving together, but now they would need to stay in formation. Each girl from room 106 would lead 20 conservative faction soldiers. These 21 would be the smallest unit from now on. The only exception was the Sun Rangers who would act as a flying column, striking at enemy weak spots or backing up allies. Not destroying this composition was essential to come out victorious.

Having formed in squads of 21 the surface troops continued down the tunnel. After going down for about 100 meters, the tunnel ended and their view opened up. The tunnel was connected to a wide space. It was a large cave created by the People of the Earth's technology. It was several hundred meters large, and despite being underground it was properly lit up. A globe like the sun itself was lighting up the entire vast cave from overhead.

"It seems like the earthquake weapon, Earth Dragon, is in there."

In the middle of the cave, underneath the globe, was a building resembling a base. It was over a 100 meters large, and since Earth Dragon was, according to the design plans, several tens of meters, it seemed like the ideal size for the weapon.

"I'm getting a big energy reaction as well. It is most likely that building."

The computer in Ruth's armor calculated an estimate of energy within the building from the trace amounts leaking out. It was enough energy to support a city and it seemed to be generated from within the base.

"It looks like they're getting serious as well."

In front of Shizuka's glance were armed radical faction squads, standing between them and the base. They far outnumbered the guards on the surface. Normal soldiers numbered over a hundred, and then there were mechanical soldiers, automated soldiers and assault vehicles. Their formation was solid as well with mechanical and automatic soldiers in the front and assault vehicles behind them. The soldiers were positioned to give these back up.

"It looks like they never intended to back up the ones on the surface, but rather settle this down here."

Looking at the same thing Shizuka was looking at, Maki reached a conclusion.

The Invaders' Battlefields

The girls had believed that it would be problematic if the radical faction had blocked them off at the tunnel leading to the base and attempted to break through before that happened. But there would only be a point in doing that if their forces rivaled each other. If the radical factions forces far outnumbered their enemy then they could fight in an open space to make use of their superior numbers. There was no point in fighting in a narrow space and limit their forces.

"So they figured they could win in a frontal attack. Hah, I'll make them pay for underestimating me."

Theia showed a chilling smile as she spoke. While Theia had grown physically and mentally, she still had a lot of pride. Nowadays she could mostly forgive what people say to her as long as they're on friendly terms, but she couldn't forgive those hostile to her for making fun of her. Theia felt like she was being made fun of in this situation and was enraged.

"We are not underestimating you at all, princess Theiamillis."

"This voice is!?"

"Elexis!"

That was when a voice could be heard from a nearby speaker. It was a voice that wasn't just familiar to Theia, but to Ruth as well. He was Ruth's previous fiancé that had turned into an enemy, and he was someone that Ruth couldn't forgive.

And almost at the same time as his voice, a half transparent hologram of Elexis appeared in front of Theia and the others. He was as refined and handsome as usual. However, that rubbed both Theia and Ruth the wrong way.

"It is because we are not underestimating you that we chose to fight in this place where we can use our full force. Doing it on the surface would simply make us stand out too much."

Theia and Ruth were surprised by Elexis' sudden appearance. However, at the same time there were a lot of things that hadn't made sense until now, such as the production technology for their weapons being so exceptionally high.

"You bastard… how dare you appear in front of us. And working alongside the radical faction at that."

Theia angrily glared at the hologram. To her, Elexis wasn't simply just an enemy. He was someone who had tried to kill Koutarou, which was something she could never forgive. As a result, her sharp glare pierced through the camera and reached Elexis directly.

"I must have misjudged you. Goals and means aside, I believed you at least had your pride."

The same was true for Ruth. She sent a chilling glance at Elexis.

"That smarts. However, we have a goal as well. It's something we have to accomplish, even if I have to somewhat throw away my pride."

"We? Could it be… are you working together with Maya-sama?"

Maki had quietly been listening in, but she sensed the presence of Maya from Elexis' nonchalantly words and couldn't stay quiet.

"Whoops, you were Maya's apprentice weren't you… what a careless thing of me to say."

Elexis had a happy smile on his face. He had taken quite a liking to Maya. With her unexpected things happened, one after another, even Maki's appearance felt like it.

"Is Maya-sama here!?"

"That's not something I can say. Koutarou-kun has gotten angry at me for not treating my allies well before. But I think you'll find out if you make it all the way to me."

"Then I'll be right there. So just you wait."

"There you have it, so brace yourself, Elexis! Now that we know that you're here too, we definitely won't back away. We'll make you regret making an enemy out of us!"

"I'll prepare some snacks and tea and await your arrival, princess."

With those words as his last, Elexis' hologram vanished and the speakers turned off. At the same time, the radical faction began moving towards Theia and the others. Seeing that, Theia ordered her allies to advance.

"Let's go men! We'll disperse these pests, beat down Elexis and destroy Earth Dragon!"

Like that, the surface troops' battle began.

Part 3

The underground city built by the People of the Earth, the town of Sial. It was intended to become the People of the Earth's second hometown, and its name was taken from the name of their original home. And in fact, many considered it their home. Their pride and traditions existed in this place.

Now that town of Sial was burning. While Kiriha was being taken to the radical faction's base she could see it burning through the window of the car.

Bullets flew through the streets and many people could be seen lying down in the alleys, untreated. The executive branch had been hit first and the city was left paralyzed. Explosions were occuring all over, and more than half of the temples for the goddess of creation had been blown away.

The nation, the traditions, the history, the belief and the people. The very identity of the People of the Earth was being trampled and was being led down the path of ruin. However, what made this problem more complex that it was yet another part of their identity that was ruining it.

To the radical faction, the town of Sial was not a symbol of tradition, but a symbol of defeat and humiliation. Despite having superior technology, the People of the Earth had been robbed of their territory and chased underground. That was a prideful choice of not picking up arms, but the radical faction didn't think of it that way. To them, the town of Sial was a prison for the defeated. That's why they believed returning to the surface and reclaiming their home was absolute justice, and for that sake they wouldn't mind using military force. In fact, it was their right. On top of that, being ruled by superior people would make the people on the surface happy as well. That was the correct tradition and pride of their people. Or so the radical faction believed at least.

The radical faction rejected their history as being false ever since they were driven underground. They also couldn't see any value in the town of Sial. To them, this was just a refugee camp. That's why they wouldn't hesitate to destroy their own hometown as long as they secured enough of a productive capability.

This battle was between two parts of their identity. A tragedy born from their collision. It was something that they hadn't been able to solve while keeping it contained. If left alone, this tragedy would spread to the surface as well.

And in order to avoid that, she didn't fear for her own life. Looking at the state of the town, Kiriha's resolve grew stronger. That was why a strong light resided in her eyes even after arriving at the radical faction's base and standing face to face with Maguz.

Kiriha was taken to the radical faction's base which was located in an area with the oldest buildings in the new district. The radical faction had been formed a long time ago, and their secret base had been around for ages. Originally this area was supposed to be designated as part of the old district as well, but those in the radical faction that were on the administration had secretly removed it from the list, because it would stand out if people visited a certain area of the old district time and time again. The conservative faction also had a preconception that if a new secret base was going to be made, it would be in the old district. Thanks to that, this place was in their blind spot, and they could continue to hide from the conservative faction.

"…Kasumi Raiga… to think you were Maguz…"

"If you stand behind the light, nobody can see you… it's a proverb from this cursed underground, but it is unmistakably true."

The Invaders' Battlefields

Meeting Kiriha in the deepest portion of the radical faction's base, the command room, was Kasumi Raiga, the man suspected of being related to the radical faction. The truth was that he wasn't just related to the radical faction, he was in fact their leader, Maguz.

Kiriha stood in the center of the command room, facing Maguz who was sitting on the commander's seat. Her hands and feet were chained and she was unable to move. On top of that, there were armed soldiers surrounding her. As a result, the chances of her breaking free from this situation were all but zero.

"Have you ever even thought of how that light felt?"

Kiriha glared at Raiga, at Maguz, with anger filled eyes. Despite being in such a disadvantageous situation, her resolution remained firm. She was the commander left in charge of the surface invasion, she couldn't show weakness to the enemy.

"I have. That's why I spent time trying to make him understand."

Being showered with Kiriha's glare and words, Maguz showed no signs of minding it, instead he smiled. In a few years he would be in his forties, but his smile was overflowing with the innocence of youth. Sensing that, Kiriha felt like a lot of people had been attracted by that innocence.

"However, I have run out of time for that. In the end, my message couldn't reach my father's heart. How regrettable."

Maguz sadly dropped his shoulders. He wasn't lying. The man known as Maguz truly felt it was regrettable.

"Of course. How could the distant words of some unknown stranger reach Kouma's heart. If you had spoken to him closely as Raiga, they might have reached."

"What did you say!? You impudent little girl!"

The words unknown stranger didn't anger Maguz, but Tayuma who was standing next to him. He shouted at Kiriha like he was about to bite down on her. Faithful dog were apt words to describe him.

"To call Maguz-sama a stranger!"

"I don't mind, Tayuma."

"But—"

"It's fine, Tayuma. Her words are true."

"Maguz-sama…"

However, Tayuma was stopped by Maguz, and he reluctantly closed his mouth. He looked like a dog scolded by his owner.

"Indeed, it is as you say. If I had repeatedly tried to convince my father, he might have understood our justice. But coming to understand your child's selfishness is not the same as true understanding. That is unfortunate for anyone. Is it not?"

Maguz struck back. He seemed neither angered nor shaken up. On top of that, his argument was proper. A character fitting for the heir to Kasumi family could be felt from Maguz. That rubbed Kiriha the wrong way.

"That kind of argument doesn't work. It would only work if you have directly spoken to Kouma. Not having done that, your words are nothing but feeble."

"As expected from the daughter of the Kurano family, how strict. However, if I spoke to him directly my father would find out about my identity even if I hid my face. As such, if I failed, I would be over. That's not acceptable."

The Invaders' Battlefields

"You've shown your true colors, Raiga."

With her strict eyes still on Maguz, Kiriha smiled. It was a callous smile she would never show Koutarou and the other girls of room 106.

"There is no justice with you. You are only using it for your own convenience."

Fearing for his identity to be known, Maguz never tried talking with Kouma. From that moment there was no justice to be found in their cause. It was impossible for justice to exist if you gave up on trying to converse with someone before even trying. That was something even children knew.

"Kuh…"

There, confidence vanished from Maguz' expression for the first time. Unable to come up with a rebuttal to Kiriha's words, he showed an obviously unpleasant expression. To the radical faction, justice was a very important factor. It is because they had absolute justice that they could permit their own use of military force. Yet when Kiriha pointed out Maguz' flaw, he was shaken up.

"…Then I shall do so the next time I meet with my father."

However, Maguz soon recovered. Having helped with Kouma's work for a long time, he was skilled at dealing and bargaining with people. He wouldn't stay shaken for any noticeable period of time.

"So you'll capture Kouma and forcibly make him listen. That's some justice you have, Raiga."

"That sharp mind and solid judgment of yours… I should have talked to and made you an ally sooner."

"It's useless. That would only have been possible more than eleven years ago."

From the time Kiriha met Koutarou, any kind of persuasion would be meaningless. Kiriha would never try to harm the surface. So she would never have followed Raiga, who would permit such a thing.

"Hmm, more than eleven years ago… I wouldn't have thought to make you an ally back then. And in that case… we would have ended up like this anyways."

"You being taunted by a young girl was something that was decided eleven years ago."

"Then let us stop this roundabout discussion. It seems like I'm the only one losing out on it after all."

Maguz' smile vanished and he stood up from his seat to face Kiriha. Being taller, he ended looking down on her, which gave him an even more overpowering impression.

"We have captured Chief Daiha. Surrender at once and have your surface and underground troops seize their attack at once. If you do, I guarantee yours and Chief Daiha's safety."

"What value does a guarantee without justice behind it hold?"

"…However, there's nothing you can do except to believe in that."

Maguz' glance grew colder and colder. His feelings towards justice were strong.

"Before that, is the Chief even still alive?"

That was the most important point to Kiriha. Nothing could start before she confirmed that.

"A most just point. Tayuma."

"Yes Sir… Indigo Soldier, bring Kurano Daiha to us."

Tayuma called to outside the room, a door opened to the room and a lone woman entered.

"Okay, okay, you sure work a woman to her bones, really… go on, it's your turn."

The woman wore a very exposing, indigo colored outfit. Kiriha couldn't help but feel that she had met this woman before.

"Father!"

"Kiriha!?"

But that was for just an instant. The next moment, she lost all interest in the woman as she saw Daiha entering after the woman. Her heart was filled with emotions from having been able to reunite with her father.

"I'm glad, you look fine…"

Confirming that her father was safe, Kiriha let out a huge sigh of relief.

"Why did you come, Kiriha! You knew what would happen if you came!"

However, Daiha's reaction was the opposite, and he was in a panic seeing that Kiriha had come. He wasn't the kind of father that could remain calm after seeing that his daughter's life was in danger.

"But even then, you are my only relative."

"I see… you're right, Kiriha…"

But in the end he ended up accepting it. Having lost her mother early in life, Kiriha could never abandon Daiha. Kiriha's feelings towards family was far greater than a normal person's, and Daiha knew that better than anyone.

"I'm sorry Kiriha… because of me, even you've gotten…"

"No, it's fine this way…"

Relieved upon having seen her father's face, tears formed in Kiriha's eyes. Regardless of what fate they faced, one thing was for certain. Kiriha and Daiha wouldn't return alive.

"Now then, let us hear your answer, Kurano Kiriha! Do you surrender, or do you choose death!"

"Surrender is not an option. We are proud People of the Earth. If you want to kill us then just go ahead."

Kiriha was in a serious situation, but fortunately she had been able to reunite with Daiha. Having succeeded with that, she wished for nothing else. She couldn't allow their lives to turn both the surface and the underground into battlefields. Kiriha was planning on dying together with Daiha.

"…What a foolish choice, Kurano Kiriha."

Maguz was astonished by the unexpected development but soon collected himself and sent a sharp glance at her. Maguz was getting frustrated that things weren't proceeding according to plan.

"If my choice is foolish, than what about yours? If surrender is so wise, why attack the surface? You don't even know what you're doing!"

Kiriha wiped away her tears and calmly laughed. She was a descendant of the proud People of the Earth. While they might disperse for the sake of the weak, they would never give in to a villain's threats. She was the very definition of a dignified ruler.

"Wahahaha, well said, Kiriha! Raiga that is your limit!"

Daiha joined Kiriha and laughed loudly. He felt the same way Kiriha did. Neither of them never had any intention of bowing down to this villain. The apple didn't fall far from the tree.

"Curse you! Very well, I'll grant your wish right now!"

Enraged that Maguz was being taunted yet again, Tayuma pulled out his pistol and pointed it at the two. He was about to pull the trigger.

"Wait, Tayuma. You can't kill them."

However, Maguz stopped Tayuma yet again.

"Why, Maguz-sama!?"

But this time Tayuma didn't stop right away. Overly excited, he questioned Maguz for his reasons.

"We are people on the side of justice. Even if they are enemies, killing them because of personal emotions is absurd."

"F-Forgive me."

Noticing that Tayuma himself was about to harm Maguz' honor he hurriedly apologize. He was moving to kneel, but Maguz beckoned him closer before he could do so. As Tayuma rushed forward, Maguz whispered something so only he could hear.

"I see… that is a good idea."

Upon hearing Maguz' instructions, a vulgar and cruel smile appeared on his face.

With Maguz' giving the order, Kiriha and Daiha were moved from the command room to a different place. That duty fell onto Maya. Despite the seriousness of the situation, she seemed to be having fun, and her existence caused Daiha to become puzzled.

"Where are you taking us?"

"To your execution chamber."

"Execution chamber? Didn't Maguz say he wouldn't kill us?"

"Yes. That's because there were a lot of soldiers around at the time."

"I see, that makes sense."

"You and your daughter will be executed. But you will be announced as having fled overseas. Rather than having you die at the hands of the radical faction, it would be more convenient if you abandoned the conservative faction and fled."

"So you'll drag our reputation through the mud as payback for before."

"So it seems. While he's got a sharp mind, Maguz is quite a petty man…"

Secretly executing the two and announcing that they fled was a method to lower the conservative faction's morale, but Maya believed that his urge to retaliate for before played an even bigger part of this decision. He wanted to lower their reputation as payback for hurting his pride. While Maya didn't object to the actions themselves, she couldn't feel any pride in his words, and she didn't feel very good about it. As a result, she seemed ill-humored for just this moment.

Kiriha stared at Maya from the side. She looked familiar to Kiriha, but she hadn't seen her lately so she couldn't be sure. Filled with doubt, she ended up staring at Maya's face. Eventually, Maya noticed her glance and approached Kiriha.

"Now that I think about it… you were Kii, weren't you. How nostalgic, it's been about eleven years since we last met."

"So you really are the soldier from back then…"

"You remembered. Allow me to reintroduce myself. I am Maya, I am Maki's master."

"Maki's…?"

Upon hearing Maya's self introduction, Kiriha's brain started busily working.

If the woman from eleven years ago is Maki's master then…

Kiriha began thinking of the relationship of herself, of Maki and the people around them. Dissident magic users and the underground's radical faction formed a connection a long time ago, and the victims of that time were Sanae and Kiriha. Maki was Maya's disciple and fought against Yurika. People who were first believed to be unrelated appeared to have a complex connection.

Depending on the circumstances, our fighting over room 106 might also be… no, that's overthinking it…

Kiriha felt like the seemingly random pieces of a puzzle were coming together. Kiriha didn't know what its whole image would look like, but she was certain that it would be completely different from what she had imagined when she first arrived at room 106.

"But still, to think I'd end up killing you again…"

"What!?"

Daiha who had been quietly listening in shouted in surprise. He had heard what had happened eleven years ago, but he was surprised to hear that the culprit was in front of him.

"Fufu, it's like that time all over again. In that case… that boy might be making his way here."

"Boy…? You mean Koutarou."

When Maya mentioned Koutarou, Kiriha stopped her train of thoughts. He was something she couldn't ignore.

"Koutarou won't come. He has an important mission. Even if he came here, it would be to save me."

Kiriha clearly shook her head.

Kiriha had actually come with the radical faction for one more reason on top of seeing Daiha. That was to find their base. If Kiriha went along with the radical faction, Sanae would be able to track her with her ability to see auras. Sanae could easily pick up the trace of someone she was familiar with, and Kiriha had left behind her card that she was so deeply connected to. Sanae's abilities are far above what Koutarou's were eleven years ago, so they should be able to find this place right away.

However, this was a very dangerous act. Kiriha couldn't think of any conclusion other than being killed, once captured by the radical faction. In return for leading Koutarou and the others to the base, Kiriha would give up her own life. She had come, prepared for that ending. If she didn't, both the surface and the underground would be turned into battlefields. All she could do was to bet on this method.

All that was left was for Koutarou and the others to attack this place after making proper preparations. Though Kiriha and Daiha wouldn't survive, everything else would go well. Kiriha had also left her card behind to let Koutarou know of her intentions. She wanted him to forget about her and save what should be saved. That devoted desire of hers hadn't changed since that day eleven years ago.

"You really are a strange girl. You'll do the same thing you did eleven years ago."

Maya smiled at Kiriha. Her expression was less that you would show an enemy, and more that which you'd show to an old friend.

"…People don't change in just ten years."

"I think so too."

There, Maya stopped their discussion and thought about the continuation of their conversation in her mind.

That's right, people don't change over something like that. And in that case…

And Maya smiled, things had been developing in ways she didn't like, but she felt like that was about to change.

Part 4

Despite being tied to a pillar in the execution chamber, Kiriha was calm. She had been prepared for this from the very beginning. Instead, it was her father, Daiha, who was getting upset. He had prepared himself for getting killed from the moment he was kidnapped, but with Kiriha joining him, the circumstances were different. It was painful for him as a father to be unable to do anything as his daughter's life was in danger.

"I'm sorry Kiriha… please forgive your useless father."

"It couldn't be helped. But Kiriha is happy to be your daughter."

With Daiha apologizing for the umpteenth time, Kiriha showed a gentle smile. She had no regrets in this situation, there was nothing she could do but this. She neither resented Daiha nor was she angry at something else. She had no regrets about any the choices she had made until today.

I returned to the surface and reunited with Onii-chan… I no longer have any regrets. And I'm sure Onii-chan and everyone will be able to defeat the radical faction. There's nothing to worry about…

Kiriha's eyes were clear. But Daiha felt deep regret for having his daughter show such eyes in this situation. She should be able to live as a normal girl. He felt it was far too cruel for her to die after shouldering all of their tribe's problems.

"…Me too. I am proud to be your father."

However, Daiha endured those feelings and spoke his farewells. He didn't want to bother her by saying something that neither could do anything about. He at least wanted the two of them to go out smiling.

Kiriha and Daiha spoke, full of love, but Tayuma who was watching over them didn't feel even an inkling of affection. He had the eyes of a stray dog staring at its prey.

"Fufufu, Hahahaha, Maguz-sama, finally the time for the accursed Kurano family to meet its end!"

Tayuma, Maguz and Maya looked into the execution chamber from observer seats built so they could look down from above. Tayuma, who was overly excited, clung to the window as he stared at Kiriha and Daiha. Because he had been betrayed by the Kurano family over and over again, he felt immense joy.

"The Kurano family are both the conservative faction's leaders and at the same time their mental support. With them gone, the conservative faction will collapse from within. Our victory is near."

In contrast to Tayuma, Maguz' glance was chilling. But even then, he felt not an inkling of affection. While there might be a difference in hot and cold, it didn't change that Kiriha and Daiha were loathed enemies.

"Hmm… you sure seem to have quite easily decided to have them killed despite having served them for so long."

Compared to the other two, there was still some affection within Maya. Maya prioritized herself, while Kiriha and Daiha prioritized the whole. While there was a difference in their priorities, she could sympathize with them sincerely facing their problems. In her words, good and evil both had their own ways of blooming.

"Indeed, I have served the Kurano family for over 20 years. However, they were just days of submission. I have continued to sharpen my fangs during those days."

Maguz, or Raiga, had served the Kurano family together with his father Kouma. Their family had done so for over four and a half century. But to him, those days were nothing but humiliating memories where he had been forced to serve. He felt the same way towards them as the radical faction felt towards the town of Sial. For better or for worse, Maguz was the embodiment of the radical faction.

"…You have a lot going on too."

Maya didn't try speaking any longer and ended their conversation with vague words. As expected, its content was nothing but undesirable. That was the only way Maya could interpret it.

Maya had saved Maki from the slave merchant because she needed her talent, but looking back at their relationship now, she felt like that hadn't been all there was to them. That's why Maya would give it her all and crush Maki if she stood in her way as an enemy. That was Maya's way of living.

That was why Maya didn't like that Maguz held no emotion whatsoever to the underground world and its populace. Maguz was already on the footsteps of entering his middle ages, but based on the way he spoke, he had spent his years without even looking at his surroundings. There was a big difference between an action taken after learning everything, and knowing nothing. To Maya, Maguz looked like a child.

Elexis would never act like this… I guess it's because he shut himself in, in this small underground world…

While she didn't like it, pointing that out would only result in a loss for her. Instead she chose not to continue on that topic but to switch to something else. There was actually something she wanted to ask of him.

"By the way, may I ask you something, Maguz?"

"I don't mind."

"Does that codename of yours… does Maguz have some kind of origin?"

"It does. I took it from the name of our ancient leader. That leader's name was forbidden to speak as he strived to use military force to obtain supremacy. As a result, there are now very few that now of the origin of that name."

The People of the Earth's ancestors were chased out from their true homes as criminals. The reason for that was a leader by the name of Maguz. Using force, he tried to rule the world. For that reason, he was stripped of his position and exiled. The ancestors of the People of the Earth were those who had exiled him, that was why they always sought to avoid conflict, because they knew of their own sin.

"That was why I chose that name. Using force, I will reclaim our home. He was ruler at the time, a legend who bravely chose to fight, and his name was—"

"Maxfern?"

Maya spoke the name Maguz tried to say before him. Hearing the name spoken, Maguz was horribly surprised that she knew of it.

"…I am amazed you know of that name."

In the legend of the People of the Earth, that leader's name was said to be Maguz Fern. Though the pronunciation was different, it was only natural for change to occur from having been passed down for so long. In fact, the difference made it sound truer. Because you could tell it wasn't stolen information.

"We have a similar legend too. Though speaking of it is also forbidden."

Maya showed the surprised Maguz a cheerful smile.

So that really was it…

That was what Maya wanted to hear. She wanted confirm the legend shared between her people and the People of the Earth.

"Now that I think about, you were from the lost seventh tribe. It wouldn't be strange for you to know."

Maguz quickly remembered Maya's place of origin and accepted it as fact. It wouldn't be strange for her to know, considering they shared the same roots.

"We both have a hard time with worthless ancestors."

"I just don't have to worry about it."

"…I expect high things from you."

As the two reached a pause in their conversation, the soldiers in the execution chamber gave the sign that preparations were complete. Seeing that from the window, Tayuma turned to look at Maguz and Maya.

"Maguz-sama, it seems the preparations for the executions are complete."

"Then let's begin right away."

"Yes Sir… Begin with away!"

Receiving orders from Maguz, Tayuma gave the soldiers the signal to begin through the window.

Thus, Kiriha's and Daiha's execution began.

Part 5

The execution method underground didn't differ much from that on the surface. Since this was a military base, they chose the simplest execution method. Which was execution by shooting. There were four men for each person to be executed. Amongst the four guns they used, three would use blanks and only one would have a real bullet. This was a method to treat the shooters' mental health by making it unsure who was the actual shooter.

"Finally, huh…"

Daiha mumbled while looking at the four shooters lining up in front of him. Death was near, but he had no fear. He only felt chagrin for not being able to protect his daughter.

"Father, keep your head up until the end. You can't show weakness to these people."

Kiriha kept her firm attitude. Despite death approaching, she felt neither fear nor regret. She simply stood there in a dignified fashion.

"…You are strange, Kiriha."

His daughter's appearance was a saving grace to Daiha. If she had been screaming out and crying, he could surely not remain calm. Though at the same time he was saddened by this. He was happy that she had matured, but he still wished for her to remain a child.

"No, I was simply thinking that soon I will be able to meet with mother."

"You're right. I'll think about the same."

Kiriha and Daiha smiled at each other one last time.

Eleven years ago, Kiriha had lost her mother, and Daiha his wife. That's why, while they felt sad that they would die, those feelings were softened up when they thought that they'd reunite with their lost family member.

Onii-chan, I'll leave the rest to you… I'm sure you can protect the People of the Earth and the surface… and all the girls of room 106…

Kiriha's only wished that she could take responsibility until the end. She simply didn't have the time to find the radical faction's base, and ended up having to rely on Sanae's abilities. She also left the fighting itself to Koutarou. While she felt bad that her all hadn't been enough, she didn't regret anything. The person she left the rest to was someone she trusted more than anyone. She had no worries about the future. It was because of that, that she had been able to choose such a reckless strategy.

"Take aim!"

Following the captain's orders, the eight shooters aimed their guns. Four muzzles were pointed at both Kiriha and Daiha. While staring into those muzzles, Kiriha thought back to everything that had happened until today.

The meeting in room 106. The days when they had fought over that small room. When they had gone to the beach to take a break, Sanae had been kidnapped and the girls worked together for the first time. Next, when they were doing the play, they had learned of each others unexpected sides. Christmas, the second play, the ski trip. At first they had only fought, but as time passed Kiriha could only remember the happy memories. That's why she thought that she had lived a happy life.

I was able to find Onii-chan and learn that he is living happily, and while for a short time, we had been able to support each other. That's enough. Onii-chan, please protect the others…

Her bonds with her friends had grown deep, she had spent every day happy and experienced a love unlike all others. Kiriha had been happy. That was what she truly believed. That's why she had to stop this fighting as quickly as possible. Kiriha wasn't the only one that had spent this year happily. The happiness that overflowed from both the surface and underground couldn't be allowed to be lost.

"…I love you, Onii-chan…"

Kiriha smiled as she whispered and closed her eyes. The muzzles were already aimed at her. Once the captain gave the order to fire, Kiriha would lose her life.

"Fire!"

And just as the captain gave the orders, a loud sound came from above and the ground shook a little. The shooters fired at the same time, but for some reason, the bullets didn't harm Kiriha and Daiha.

"…J-Just what…?"

Confused, Kiriha opened her eyes. In front of her she saw a familiar back. It was a large back clad in blue armor. Kiriha would never mistake that back. It was her beloved, Koutarou.

What had protected Kiriha and Daiha from the bullets was the barrier created from Koutarou's armor, after he had destroyed the ceiling and entered the chamber, and Harumi's and Yurika's defensive spells. They had made it in time, though only barely.

"I'm sorry for being late. Are you okay, Kiriha-san?"

Koutarou slightly turned to look behind him so he could confirm that Kiriha was alright. The moment their eyes crossed, large tears fell from her eyes as she cried out loudly.

"Onii-chan!? Why did you come to save me!?"

"…It's been a while since I heard you say something like that."

Those were words Koutarou had heard eleven years ago. They were words Kiriha had thrown at Koutarou when he prioritized her over his mother.

"The people close to you will fall in danger for my sake! And there's also the people on the surface and underground! Do you understand!?"

Kiriha feared that many would be sacrificed for her sake. That's why she wanted Koutarou and the others to take more certain actions. She wanted them to take their time to prepare and challenge the radical faction once their defeat was a certainty. A certain victory would be the method to protect the most people.

"I don't get it at all."

Despite Kiriha's desperation, Koutarou disappointedly shook his head.

"I… We are stupid, so we only get one thing."

"What do you understand!?"

"That is that Kiriha-san and Kii are important to us."

When Kiriha had disappeared, knowing she would die, Koutarou and the others' opinions were all the same. That was to save Kiriha as quickly as possible. They knew that Kiriha wanted a certain victory, but they still couldn't bear it.

"And I would never accept it. There is no way that a small happiness should be sacrificed for a bigger one!"

Ever since Koutarou had parted with Alaia in the past Forthorthe, he had always been thinking about whether the few should be sacrificed for the many or not, like how Alaia had sacrificed herself for her people. However, no matter how hard he thought about it, Koutarou couldn't accept it. That's why he wouldn't allow the same unhappiness to repeat himself in front of him.

"I will beat down these guys and bring you back safe and sound! I will protect the surface and underground on top of that! There's no correct path, other than this!"

In order to obtain a correct result, he couldn't choose an incorrect method. If he did, the results would be the same as the radical faction's. The correct result had to be gained through the correct method. That was the justice that Koutarou had accepted.

If he didn't, he would surely fail somewhere along the line. A result built upon a lie didn't have the power to grant people happiness. In order to obtain a long lasting happiness, he would need to travel down the correct path, no matter how difficult it may be. That was the path Koutarou would travel down.

"…Onii-chan… okay, I understand…"

Thanks to Koutarou's decisive words, strength returned to Kiriha's eyes. To obtain correct results, she had to travel down the correct path. Just a while ago, she had been so rushed that she hadn't chosen that path. However, now she believed that she should have.

"Lend me your strength, Koutarou!"

"That's more like it, Kiriha-san. Everyone, you got it!?"

"Leave it to this Sanae-chan!"

"The time has come for the magical girl to fulfill her role!"

"Let's do our best, Kurano-san!"

The Invaders' Battlefields

The path Kiriha was about to choose was an extremely difficult one. However, she had those who would walk down that path with her. Koutarou, Sanae, Yurika, Harumi and Theia and the others on the surface. As long as she was with them, she firmly believed that she could reach the goal.

Part 6

Maya's eyes shone when they laid eye on Koutarou, standing magnificently behind his bright shining barrier.

You did well to come, my boy!

Maya didn't like Maguz' way of doing things, so while she didn't say out loud, she welcomed Koutarou's appearance to the execution chamber, to the point where she would dance out in joy if she could.

The radical faction soldiers weren't smiling like Maya was. From the moment Koutarou and the three girls had jumped in, the radical faction soldiers had fallen into chaos.

The majority of the soldiers were a disorderly crowd with no actual combat experience. Not only were there very few who had fought against an anti-invader squad like the Sun Rangers, even those who did had little experience. The Sun Rangers who had a shortage of manpower and had therefore been able to gain a great deal of experience made a nice contrast to the soldiers. As a result, it would take a lot of time before the soldiers could recover.

"What are you doing! Get it together!"

"E-Everyone, reload! Switch over to real bullets!"

Upon hearing the irritated Tayuma's voice, the captain of the execution squad hurriedly ordered his men. Their weapons were loaded with a mix of blanks and real bullets. They wouldn't be able to put up a proper fight like that. So they hurriedly changed to real ammunition and reloaded.

While the shooters were confused, the haniwas cut the rope that had been used to tie up Kiriha and set her free.

"Thank you, Karama, Korama."

"Ho-, we're glad you're alright Nee-san, Ho-!"

"Take us with us the next time you are kidnapped Ho-! Don't be so reserved Ho-!"

"Yes, I will do that. I'm sorry."

"We and Nee-san are as one Ho-!"

"We will die together Ho-!"

Meanwhile, Sanae, Yurika and Harumi set Daiha free. This was their first meeting, but Daiha looked at them like friends, having guessed from the circumstances.

"I am sorry, girls. Are you Kiriha's friends?"

"Yeah. We didn't get along well at first, but now we're friends."

"Kiriha-san was kind from the start."

"I was surprised to hear she was from the underground though."

"Thank you, it seems my daughter is blessed with good friends."

Next, Daiha looked at Koutarou's back.

"…And he is Koutarou, huh."

Koutarou stood between his allies and the enemies, protecting them with the barrier created from his armor. While the soldiers may have been confused, the party had only been able to rescue Kiriha and Daiha because Koutarou was standing in the enemy's way.

"You know him?"

"Yes. I have heard of him from Kiriha. A weak yet strong man, unable to live his life skillfully. It seems like he is exactly like I was told."

Looking at Koutarou as he spoke with Kiriha without dropping his guard, Daiha felt like he was the kind of man that was only able to go straight forward, and when the world turned, he would repeatedly crash into the wall, hurt himself all over, but still continue to walk straight forward.

As Daiha was looking at Koutarou, Kiriha lined up next to him.

"Koutarou."

"I'm really glad you're okay… Don't go too far ahead, you'll step outside of the barrier."

"I know. I will always walk by your side."

"I don't want any more repeats of today okay?"

"Yeah. I'm sorry."

Kiriha looked up at Koutarou with eyes filled with trust. That much was obvious even to Daiha.

Of course Kiriha would fall for him. While she looks skillful, she can only walk straight forward as well…

Daiha held complex feelings for his daughter's beloved. However, Koutarou had saved Kiriha several times, and this time he had saved him too. That's why he didn't want to intervene with Kiriha's decision any more. Daiha's only saving grace was that Koutarou was someone he had a good feeling about. While the world might think of him as a doting parent, Daiha truly felt relieved.

"Fire! Fire! Don't leave any of them alive!"

That was as long as Koutarou and the others could rejoice together. From the observer seats, Tayuma flew into a rage and gave the order to attack. In response, the soldiers in the execution chamber, the eight shooters and their captain, and an additional four guards, pulled the triggers of their guns at once.

The bullets fired from these 13 men rained down on Koutarou and the others. However, all of the bullets were repelled by Koutarou's and the others' barriers. The distortion field from Koutarou's armor, the Spiritual Energy Field from the haniwas, Harumi's and Yurika's defensive spells all of different characteristics formed a composite barrier, which simple firearms lacked the power to penetrate.

"Damnit, once again! Curse you, you little brat!"

Seeing the bullets get easily repelled, Tayuma grinded his teeth as if he was being personally insulted. Those feelings were directed towards Koutarou who had turned the tables on this definite situation. Since the same thing had happened several months ago when he had attacked the surface, Tayuma, with his pride, was enraged as he glared at Koutarou.

"Calm down, Tayuma. Did you forget why we gathered that data at the factory?"

In contrast to Tayuma, Maguz was calm. With a nonchalant gesture, he waved his right hand and sent a signal to his subordinate standing by in a corner. The subordinate then quickly operated a nearby panel.

"R-Right!"

Realizing Maguz' intentions, Tayuma barely managed to regain his calm. At the same time, the large door leading to the execution chamber opened and a radical faction combat squad entered.

The squad consisted of 24 mechanical soldiers created through spiritual energy technology, behind them were 24 infantry armed with heavy weaponry, and eight large machine guns that

would automatically attack targets. From the combat data taken from the factory, this was believed to be enough firepower to defeat Koutarou and the other four.

"Maguz-sama, please run away."

"Abandoning our stronghold, where exactly should I run to?"

"T-That's… it's indeed as you say…"

"We'll finish this here! We're going too, Tayuma!"

"Yes Sir!"

On top of the original 13 soldiers, and the additional 56 that had entered, Maguz and Tayuma also headed for the execution chambers. The two of them were armed with spiritual energy technology and magic.

The two wore armor made using spiritual energy technology. The armors were decorated in traditional People of the Earth fashion and their design was based on old documents regarding war.

They wore large helmets, strong armor covering their entire body and each held their own weapon. Maguz had a longbow and Tayuma had a long sword. They were both weapons made through magic just for them, and held power that surpassed modern weaponry. Since Maguz and Tayuma both came from families known for their bravery, they were quite skilled at handling these kinds of classic weapons. Thanks to that, they were much more dangerous than the soldiers armed with firearms.

Adding together the soldiers and weapons there were 69 plus Maguz and Tayuma making for a total of 71. That large force were pointing their weapons at Koutarou and the other five. Considering the battle at the factory, Koutarou and the others had no chance of winning.

"Don't think you'll be able to get out of here alive, brat!"

Tayuma threatened Koutarou full of confidence with an overwhelming force at his back. But even in this situation Koutarou remained confident.

"Tayuma, just getting out alive wouldn't be that hard."

"What!? You sore loser!"

"I'm not a sore loser, you'll find out soon enough."

"As if I'd let you! I'll crush you!"

"The fact that it's not difficult is the difference between Kiriha-san and you guys… not that you would understand."

"Then I'll start by killing that girl!"

Tayuma roared as he dropped Kiriha's name. However, Kiriha didn't seem to be shaken by Tayuma's threat either. In fact, she was pretty much ignoring his existence as she called out to Maguz.

"Raiga… is there no way to convince you to stop this battle?"

"Having abandoned battle for several thousand years is what's really unnatural. It's not like I wish for the battle to continue on forever, but there should be some kind of reaction."

Throughout their long history, the People of the Earth had avoided fighting. Maguz felt like that was unnatural. With humans being living creatures, it was only natural for friction to occur. If you continued running away whenever that happened, you would eventually run out of places to run and be ruined. Just like how the People of the Earth were now falling into ruin. There were times

when people had to use any means necessary to remain in place. The People of the Earth should return to that natural state, though that was Maguz' idea of their natural state. That was Maguz' true desire.

"Before that reaction settles down, we will be ruined! That much is obvious if you observe the history on the surface!"

Kiriha also knew that there were times when you had to fight. That's why she picked up weapons to stand against the radical faction. However, in the history of the surface, every single nation that had turned their weapons on their own people had without exception been ruined. Kiriha and the conservative faction believed that battle should be limited to some conditions. It was the same reason why the People of the Earth had avoided battle for all this time.

"We are different from the surface dwellers. We are superior to them."

Domination by the superior and obedience by those inferior.

Maguz believed that was the real duty of the People of the Earth. However, their ancestors had not done so and instead headed underground to avoid battle. Those who remained on the surface threw away their culture and assimilated into the surface dwellers. They feared taking responsibility and delayed mankind's leap forward by some several hundred years. But if the People of the Earth ruled the surface, they could make up for that lost time. A future that was bright for everyone would open up.

"Who determines who is superior and who is inferior?! Are you going to choose the path to ruin because of your elitism, Raiga!?"

In history there had been many who believed that a superior leader should rule the world. However, there were many large pitfalls when it came to just that. Those superior would need to stay superior at all times. And even if they did, they would eventually age and die. When that happened, was there an heir just as superior? And what happened if someone even more superior appeared?

"There's no need to determine. I will forever rule under the name of Maguz! When combining our spiritual energy technology with magic, it wouldn't be impossible!"

Those many problems caused these rulers to hold foolish wishes, including eternal life and omnipotence. From past to present, many rulers had been possessed with those wishes. That could be said to be a waste of time. Ironically, attempting to remain superior got in the way of just that. That was true even in the 21st century.

In short, domination by the superior was flawed and contradicted itself. That's why, during a longer period of time it would inevitably fail. Of course Kiriha would never choose that.

That same had been true for Maguz at the time, but once he found out about magic, his pride and ambition flared up. Immortality and omnipotence might not be an impossibility when magic and spiritual energy worked together. The development of Earth Dragon was yet another test case for it. Maguz ultimate goal was to raise himself to become a truly greater existence and rule the world of all eternity.

"That kind of rule would only lead to battle between immortal monsters! Why don't you show your superior intellect before you get started on that, Raiga!"

If there truly was a way to obtain immortality and omnipotence then others would eventually reach that same stage. If something was shown to be possible, it would be as difficult to reproduce it. Not only that, but it would be hard to protect a secret for all eternity. There was also the possibility that the techniques were stolen. And eventually a battle between immortal and omnipotent monsters would begin. In the end, there would still be misery.

"Oh I am showing it! This is the most superior of choices!"

Maguz believed that absolute justice was on his side, and for its sake, he would do anything. Surprisingly enough, beyond the calm in his eyes burned insanity beyond even Tayuma's.

"If that is possible, then someone, even if it's not us, will reach it! In that case, we must reach that stage before anyone else, or we will ourselves be ruled! We need the power to protect ourselves!"

"So you would rather open the gates to hell yourself than let someone else do so… how foolish…"

Even at this stage, Kiriha wished to reach a conclusion through conversation. But there was no way she could convince Maguz to stop in such a short time, not when he was so certain of his own justice. Before she did, the conservative faction would be defeated.

It was just as Theia-dono said… there is not enough time to reach your ideal… we are fools who can do nothing but push forward…

Thus Kiriha finally made up her mind. She would defeat Maguz and put an end to his ambitions. She had to stop him from opening the gates to hell. Even though she might stop Maguz here, the same problem might occur somewhere else. But that wasn't right now. There was no reason to bring about a nightmare yourself.

"Maguz, I understand what you want to say. However, I can't allow that."

Kiriha readied her own weapon. It was a long naginata capable of manipulating fire and lightning that Clan had sent over for her.

"You would do well to remember this, we are prideful People of the Earth! Maguz, we won't let you rule over anything!"

Kiriha looked magnificent and beautiful with her naginata in hand. The radical faction soldiers that were faced with her appearance instinctively held their breaths. Ironically enough, Kiriha who had rejected a forced domination had the true qualities of a ruler.

Part 7

Listening to Kiriha's words, Maguz lost his temper and grew ever enraged.

"Then I will bring ruin to you right now, and begin my rule! My soldiers, kill them!"

He no longer had the expression of a calm leader. That was now the expression of a cold-blooded cruel beast baring his fangs. His heart was as twisted as Tayuma's.

"…I'm sorry, uncle Kouma. Your son has gone to a place from which he can no longer return…"

Koutarou mumbled sadly as he looked at the attacking crowd of enemies. He had no sympathy for Raiga. However when he thought about his father, he felt incredibly sad as he strongly valued family.

"What are you mumbling about, brat!"

However, Tayuma erased that sadness. Standing at the front of the soldiers, the sight of Tayuma's desire to rule by force and only caring for his own egotistical justice filled Koutarou's heart with anger which grew even greater because of this sadness.

"Did you lose your mind from this difference in power!?"

"I'm glad you are here Tayuma! Thanks to you I remembered my role!"

Angered, Koutarou extended his right hand forward and he took a stance as if he was going to attack Tayuma, but what he did next was not an attack.

"Cradle, give me my sword!"

Koutarou gave orders to Clan's spaceship above the surface through his bracelet.

"As you wish, my lord."

Clan's spaceship, the Cradle, obeyed those orders without delay.

"Comeeee! Signaltiiin!"

"Call sign confirmed, coordinate axis fixed. Commencing transfer of Signaltin."

A black hole appeared in front of Koutarou's extended right hand. It was a hole in space-time created so that the Cradle could deliver Koutarou his sword.

"Hm…?"

When Koutarou grabbed a hold of Signaltin's handle in the hole, he noticed something strange. Apart from the first space-time hole, an additional six had surrounded him. Inside the additional holes were devices each larger than a soccer ball and they left the holes and approached Koutarou without permission.

"Clan, what is this?"

"It's additional equipment for you that Theiamillis-san and Pardomshiha prepared for you. It's name is Garb of Lord."

"Theia and Ruth-san did?"

While he understood the situation, Koutarou was still puzzled. That was when a hologram with two choices appeared in front of him. They were 'Become the emperor' and 'Do not become the emperor.'

"It seems like Elfaria-san was also part of the development."

"…It sure looks like it."

Koutarou touched the 'Become the emperor' choice while wryly smiling. It was the startup order for the additional equipment, but Elfaria had put her own twist on it. It was almost certainly some kind of joke or prank.

"Engaging Legendary Weapon System series 01-A, Garb of Lord. Garb of Lord has been put under control of the maneuver suit."

Through Koutarou's selection, his armor and the Garb of Lord connected through gravitational waves, and was put under control of the armor's AI. That was when the independent parts began connecting to the armor. The pieces of Garb of Lord flew around the air and automatically attached to each part of Koutarou's armor.

"I see, so this is what the Garb of Lord is…"

The additional equipment named Garb of Lord strengthened the functions of Koutarou's armor. There were mainly six parts that made up the Garb of Lord. Shoulder armor that covered left and right shoulder, armor that covered his chest, armor that covered his back and armor for each leg. From his back hung a decorative mantle. Its overall design was a Forthorthe-style, filled with curves and it used blue and white colors like the Satomi band of knights. As a result, Koutarou's armor became more extravagant, to the point of looking regal.

"Your Excellency, Blue Knight, this ship, the Cradle, will pray for your fortune and glory in place of the nation of Forthorthe."

"Hahaha, you're full of openings brat! Did you give up already!?"

The ten something men around Tayuma all trained their guns on Koutarou. These guns were different from the weapons used for the executions as they were all larger calibers intended to be used against vehicles. No matter how strong his barrier was, it shouldn't be able to block this many shots of that caliber.

"I don't know about that, I'm simply dumbfounded from my friend's mischievous trick."

Koutarou readied Signaltin and closed in on the soldiers before they could attack.

"Detecting that armed force is being used on the enemy force. GOL will begin its attack."

"H-Hey!?"

However, the first to attack was neither the enemy nor Koutarou, but GOL, the additional equipment on Koutarou's armor, Garb of Lord.

"Activating laser cannon on right shoulder. Neutralizing the enemy forces."

The combat algorithm that Ruth had created was based on Theia's mind. As a result it was quick to decide and it didn't hesitate to use force.

"Wai—"

Before Koutarou could finish saying anything, GOL expanded the right shoulder armor and began its attack using the built in laser cannon.

The laser cannon swiftly altered its aim and intermittently fired laser beams. This looked like the laser cannon was disorderly firing, but it was actually focusing on the enemy weapons and robbed them of their ability to attack. The accuracy of its aim was also inherited from Theia.

"Could this be from back then…?"

Before Koutarou could do anything, the additional equipment had defeated the enemy on its own. Koutarou remembered its concept from before. This was 'The Super Koutarou I've Thought Up' plan that Theia had tried creating in the past. Of course like Kiriha had predicted, its scale

had been made much smaller but more realistic. However, it seemed clear that Theia had brought that concept to life.

"Curse you brat! Mechanical soldiers, move up front!"

With GOL having blasted the weapons away from the heavy infantry, the mechanical soldiers created using spiritual energy technology stepped up to the front. These mechanical soldiers were equipped with the same kind of Spiritual Energy Field that Karama and Korama had. Since GOL had restricted its firepower to only blast away the weapons, it was blocked by the mechanical soldiers barriers.

"Exchanging right shoulder weaponry, activating High Convergence Beam Cannon, beginning bombardment."

"I said you're too fast! Clan, what is going on!?"

"GOL is a completely automated system! You just fight against the enemies you want to fight against! GOL will carve open your path!"

"I see! I'm not sure if I like it or not!"

GOL would create a path for the emperor. At the same time Koutarou understood the circumstances, the weapon on his right shoulder was changed and began its attack. The weapon this time was a highly powerful beam cannon.

The beam wasn't as accurate as the laser, but it had a lot more power. While it didn't have enough power to destroy the mechanical soldiers, it could overload their barriers and cause it to lose its function.

"Sanae-chan God Arrow!"

"Thunder Lance – Modifier – Change Element Mana Energy!"

"Gather, spirits of the wind, gather as an arm and destroy my enemy! Roar! Air Sledgehammer!"

However, if their barriers were down, the girl's attacks could reach. And once GOL's beam had struck the mechanical soldiers the girls unleashed their attacks. The mechanical soldiers excelled at both offense and defense yet they didn't stand a chance. In no time at all, three soldiers had been turned into scrap.

"Impossible, this easily!?"

Seeing this result, Tayuma's eyes were wide open. According to their calculations, they should be able to win with ease with this force. Yet five heavy infantrymen had lost their weapons and three mechanical soldiers had been destroyed before they knew it, decimating their forces. This was a result nobody could believe, and the soldiers were just as shaken as Tayuma.

"Let's go, Koutarou!"

"Yeah!"

"It's our turn Ho-!"

"It's finally our time to shine again Ho-!"

Not missing that opening, Kiriha and Koutarou stepped forward. Since both of them were protected by strong barriers, they were suited for cutting into an enemy line. Their targets were Tayuma who was leading in front of the soldiers, and Maguz commanding them from behind. If those two were defeated this battle would end sooner.

"Fire! Fire! Don't let them get close!"

But by the time they had gotten half the way, Tayuma and the others recovered. 19 infantry with heavy weaponry and the eight large machine guns opened fire at Koutarou and Kiriha.

As the 27 weapons opened fire it sounded like the earth itself roared. These weren't the rifles used for execution but large caliber weapons used for battle. Koutarou's and the haniwas' barriers wouldn't be able to stand up against this for long.

"Protection From—"

Yurika tried putting a spell on Koutarou and Kiriha that would protect them from the bullets.

"Look out Yurika!"

However, just before she could, she was pushed away by Sanae. And the next moment a rain of bullets showered down on where Yurika had been standing. It was an attack from the 13 shooters in the execution chambers.

"Owowow…"

"Get up Yurika! I won't last for long!"

"Sanae-chan, thank you!"

Sanae jumped over and lent Yurika her hand. The shooters continued their firing during the time, and Sanae was repelling it with her powers, but since her powers were strong but rough, she drained quickly. Standing still for too long was dangerous.

"Sakuraba-senpai, protect Satomi-san and Kiriha-san!"

As she stood up, Yurika called out for her other ally, Harumi, to back up Koutarou. However, Harumi confidently shook her head while smiling.

"Satomi-kun and Kurano-san will be okay. Let's calm down and deal with our own opponents… Come, spirits of earth, meld into rock and become an armor to protect us! Block it! Armor of the Earth!"

With Harumi's hair glowing silver, she cast a defensive spell on herself and the others. This defensive spell was powerful and easily repelled the shooters' bullets.

"Sakuraba-senpai!? Satomi-san and Kiriha-san are in dang— eh? Huh?"

Yurika had been surprised by Harumi's actions, but when she looked back at Koutarou and Kiriha she saw that they were continuously advancing, not even caring about the fire raining down on them.

"W-Why?"

"To put it briefly, it's the mania's victory."

Sanae called out to the confused Yurika.

The GOL that Theia and the others had built didn't just have weapons built into its right shoulder, but had several special abilities. One of which was the large barrier generation device in his left shoulder.

Koutarou's barrier also had a generation device built in into it, but since it was designed using ancient armor as its basis, it couldn't find that large of device. The design took priority over its functions.

However, that wasn't the case with GOL. It had been designed with the purpose of fitting large weapons on the right shoulder and a large barrier generation device on the left. The shoulder parts weren't large just because they looked cool, but to draw out the maximum possible performance.

The barrier generation device got its energy supplied to it by the power plant built into the back armor. As a result it had far stronger defense than before. Normal firearms had no effect on it at all.

"Karama, Korama, limit the Spiritual Energy Field to only defend against spiritual energy! Leave the rest to Koutarou!"

"Roger! Changing attributes to prioritize spiritual energy defense!"

"We'll show you what we can do when we get serious Ho-!"

Forthorthe's barriers, the distortion fields, were weak against spiritual energy, but the haniwas would block that. Since the Spiritual Energy Field normally worked against all kinds of attributes, limiting it to just spiritual energy raised its potency considerably. As a result, attacks from standard spiritual energy weapons wouldn't break through.

"I'm counting on you, Signaltin!"

And the other weakness, magic, would be protected against using Signaltin's ability to dissolve magic. The spells that the heavy infantry were using were limited to the bullets they fired. Their effects were to increase the firepower and improve the accuracy, so there wasn't all that much magical power in them. So the moment they entered Signaltin's sphere of influence, they turned to normal bullets, which were no match for the barriers.

"…and that's how it works, we'll defend Kiripapa and defeat the ones over there. Once we're done we'll go help Koutarou and Kiriha."

As she finished speaking, spiritual energy overflowed from Sanae's body. This was her mimicking Harumi's PAF, strengthening her body, but the spiritual energy was so concentrated that her body emitted light. When it came to power from within, Sanae was second only to Shizuka.

"O-Okay."

Realizing that Koutarou and Kiriha wouldn't need help, Yurika pointed the tip of her cane towards the nearby soldiers. These thirteen were their first priority.

"So I'm Kiripapa, huh… fufufu."

Daiha smiled happily as he readied his own weapon. It was the Kurano family's treasure, a Japanese katana that Kouma had left with Koutarou and the others. From the moment Daiha held the sword, it started to faintly glow. This katana was also covered in spiritual energy.

"Let's go everyone. Don't overwork yourself, let's start with what we can."

Finally was Harumi. Her hair shined silver and she silently stared at the thirteen soldiers without fear or hate. To her, the radical faction was still Kiriha's countrymen, so she didn't feel any hostility towards them. She had simply recognized that she had to stop them. She held her hands in front of chest and focused magical power into them.

No wonder Kiriha always looks like she's having so much fun. In this group, being from the underground is next to nothing. It might be because they're all special that they can truly understand each other…

When looking at the three girls Daiha, he felt that Kiriha truly was lucky, and that she truly had some good friends.

"…I'm sure they'll laugh at me for being a doting parent…"

That's why he would protect the girls, he wouldn't let the radical faction lay on finger one them. Daiha was determined to protect Kiriha's friends for the troubles he had caused her. Filled with determination, he gripped his katana firmly.

Part 8

Realizing that normal shooting wouldn't be effective, Tayuma had his subordinates reorganize their formation. The remaining 21 mechanical soldiers would take the front while the accurate but slow moving automatic eight machine guns stayed behind. The remaining 19 heavy infantry split into groups of ten and nine and spread out around the flanks. They would put as much stress on Koutarou's barrier as possible, and finish this up close with the mechanical soldiers.

"As always you are at least cunning, Tayuma!"

Koutarou readied Signaltin and faced the incoming mechanical soldiers. In total ten of them were closing in, five for Koutarou and five for Kiriha. Attacking with any more than this would only work against them, so the remaining eleven stayed back to open fire.

"Quit your crap! Is that something you can say when you're relying on great powers!?"

"Is that something you can say when you rely on a truly great power like that earthquake weapon!?"

"Justice is with us! For the sake of justice, any and all means are forgiven!"

Falling for Koutarou's provocation, Tayuma held his large sword and stepped forward. As a result, the mechanical soldiers' formation became slightly disordered.

With this it's a little bit easier to fight…

The mechanical soldiers' weapons were magically enchanted blades. If they touched Signaltin he could erase that magic temporarily, but they still functioned as normal blades. If the magical blade broke through the spiritual energy, and physical barrier before being erased, Koutarou and Kiriha could still be harmed.

On top of that, the mechanical soldiers further away had hand cannons he could sense magical power from. Since he could only sense the magical power he didn't know its effect, but it would be troublesome if they opened fire in the middle of a melee. Fortunately, considering they weren't using them before, there must be limited ammunition.

Since Koutarou sensed danger from the mechanical soldiers he had chosen to taunt Tayuma. If Tayuma joined in then it would be slightly harder to use ranged weapons.

"Koutarou, we have to work together to do this!"

"Koutarou, we have decided to synchronize and move together with your armor Ho!"

"Take care of Ane-san Ho! Show them how well you get along Ho!"

"Alright! Let's go together!"

Koutarou and Kiriha advanced while repelling the enemy fire. The mechanical soldiers met them on their way. The first to enter their range were the four mechanical soldiers that had been the closest.

"Moveeee!"

Using a naginata, Kiriha had the longest reach, which allowed her to make the first attack. She swung her naginata as she screamed loudly. Since she was going up against mechanical soldiers there was no hesitation in her swing. Reacting to Kiriha's intention to fight, electricity formed in the blade and she struck the approaching mechanical soldiers.

Among the two in front of her, one was split in half. Since the naginata was covered in spiritual energy and electricity it had exceptionally high attack power. But having cut through the first one, it lost too much power, and the second one could block it.

"I guess it won't be that easy!"

Koutarou clicked with his tongue as he crossed swords with the two that had approached him. Alone they wouldn't be all that impressive, but they had bigger numbers. It was difficult to not show any openings to all enemies.

"Maybe it will be."

However, Kiriha still seemed confident. And that reason soon revealed itself.

Koutarou's right shoulder began shining and the three mechanical soldiers in front of Koutarou and Kiriha were smashed into pieces. It was a bombardment from the beam cannon built into Koutarou's right shoulder. Since the opponents he was just about to defeat were smashed into pieces, Koutarou instinctively felt let down.

"…It looks like the armor will this on its own."

If the radical faction showed any openings towards Koutarou or Kiriha, GOL would finish them off. They were swift and accurate attacks that made Koutarou wonder if he might actually win just by standing there.

"GOL will wipe out our openings! We're pushing through, Koutarou!"

"Yeah!"

Koutarou and Kiriha wiped out the oncoming mechanical soldiers as they continued their advance.

"Not good Ho-! We're losing to this armor's decoration Ho-!"

"Guts Ho! We won't lose to some soulless machine Ho!"

Thanks to GOL, the haniwas following after the two were given some space to attack and not just focus on defending. They fired beams from their mouths that knocked the soldiers out and attacked the mechanical soldiers with fire and lightning. Thanks to GOL's defense and counter attacks, Koutarou and the others became more aggressive overall. With that, their attack speed increased and the defeated enemy after enemy.

"C-Curse you, damn brats! Don't get full of yourselves!"

Tayuma excitedly stepped forward and swung at Koutarou with his long sword infused with spiritual energy and magical power. It was only obvious for Tayuma to get so excited as at this point, he had already lost 30% of his forces. Despite having an overwhelming advantage in numbers, 71 vs. 6, neither Koutarou or the others had been harmed, yet they had lost over 20 soldiers. Thinking about that normally, this was a disastrous defeat, but Tayuma was frantic to not let it end like this.

"Koutarou, leave the small fry to me!"

"Please do!"

Up until now they had been working together, but they would need to split up when dealing with Tayuma. So Koutarou would deal with Tayuma while Kiriha restrained the surrounding troops.

"Dieeeeee!"

Tayuma's sword broke through the armor's distortion field and the haniwas' Spiritual Energy Field. Koutarou's and Tayuma's swords clashed with a loud noise. While Signaltin temporarily erased the magic when they collided, Tayuma was wearing a powered armor, so his blow was still heavy. Koutarou\s armor had to use its maximum output to block it.

"The hell I will!"

Koutarou used both hands to push Tayuma back. When it came to the armor's physical strength, Koutarou's was superior. Forthorthe's generators were superior in output.

"Braaaat!"

However, Tayuma was more agile. He quickly fixed his posture and attacked Koutarou again. Since his armor was made using spiritual energy technology, it was superior when it came to replicating its user's movements. On top of that, Tayuma was a master with the sword. His armor reproduced his sword handling and swung down the sword towards Koutarou.

"No you don't!"

His own sword wouldn't make it in time, so Koutarou focused on his left hand. He was still wearing the gauntlet that let him create fire and lighting. Using its power, Koutarou created fire to launch a counter attack at Tayuma.

However, Tayuma's armor was equipped with a Spiritual Energy Field, the underground's version of a barrier. That barrier worked excellently at dealing with natural phenomenon. Since the flame was a natural phenomenon created through converting spiritual energy, it didn't harm Tayuma.

"Guh!"

However, with the flame blocking his view, Tayuma interrupted his attack and distanced himself. Humans were living creatures of nature, they too were instinctively cautious of fire.

"You're pretty good, brat…"

After distancing himself a little, Tayuma turned the tip of his sword towards Koutarou once more.

"That's my line. Aren't you pretty old."

Koutarou also pointed his sword towards Tayuma. As they turned their swords against one another, their fighting spirits increased.

"I can't retire until I fulfill my duty for our great cause!"

"Then we'll make you retire!"

"You're full of crap, brat!"

Having run out of patience, Tayuma attacked Koutarou again. Koutarou calmly looked at the approaching Tayuma while holding Signaltin ready. During that time, GOL was actively assisting Kiriha, but Koutarou himself was focusing only on Tayuma.

"What's the matter!? Weren't you going to make me retire!?"

Tayuma unleashed a series of attacks to corner Koutarou. Since multiple enemies were surrounding Koutarou, his barrier and weaponry couldn't focus on Tayuma. On top of that, Harumi was busy dealing with other enemies and couldn't assist him. Because of that, Koutarou could only use his sword skills to fight against Tayuma. Tayuma was born from a warrior family, and his skill with this sword was considerable, on top of that, his armor made him more agile than Koutarou, so Koutarou was on the defensive and being cornered.

"That's my intentions. However, there's no reason for me to go out of my way and make you retire on my own."

However Koutarou smiled, and he had a proper reason to do so. He had realized that he couldn't lose.

"Sorry for keeping you waiting, Koutarou!"

"The Kurano girl!?"

In the next moment, Tayuma's sword was intercepted by Kiriha's naginata. Tayuma looked at her with surprise. She should have been busy dealing with the surrounding enemies.

"Don't forget about us Ho-!"

"The brothers of flame and thunder, Karama and Korama are here Ho-!"

While Tayuma was stopped, Karama and Korama assaulted him with fire and electricity. Since this was just as Tayuma had launched his attack, parts of his spiritual energy barrier had been undone. Part of the haniwas attacks reached one of those unguarded areas.

"D-Damnit! You damn automated dolls!"

Tayuma's armor was scorched and he had received a slight shock, but it wasn't enough damage to take him down. As expected, just having part of their attack go through the barrier wouldn't be enough. However, disliking Kiriha and the haniwas attacking together, Tayuma leaped backwards and greatly distanced himself from them. As he did, he realized why Kiriha had been able to go support Koutarou.

"Impossible! This easily!?"

What he saw was the thirteen shooters in the execution chambers collapsed on the floor. This was Harumi's and the others' doing, and defeating these thirteen with such weak firepower wasn't all that difficult. Once that was over with, Harumi and the others moved to help deal with the other enemies. With that, a huge load was taken off of Kiriha's and the haniwas' shoulders and they were able to go back up Koutarou.

"Tayuma, our real fight starts now."

The beam cannon on Koutarou's right shoulder turned towards Tayuma. At the same time, the barrier generation device in Koutarou's left shoulder adjusted its output. With Koutarou and Kiriha close again, GOL shrunk the barrier's effective area, and made it thicker.

"What!?"

"We're angry… at how you radicals do things."

Koutarou pointed the tip of his sword towards Tayuma once more. That was when Tayuma shouted out in rage.

"So what if you're angry!?"

Kiriha readied her naginata and faced Tayuma.

"Therefore, brace yourself, Shijima Tayuma! We're going to completely destroy that justice that you speak of!"

The two haniwas were by Kiriha's sides. Both she and Koutarou were serious. All of that equipment was pointed towards the enemy in front of them, towards Tayuma.

"…Then I'll have to join in as well."

"Maguz-sama!?"

"I have protect my own justice. From people like you, that would look away from reality…"

Maguz who had been surveying the battle from behind advance to right behind Tayuma. He was holding a large bow in both hands and was aiming at Kiriha.

"It's dangerous, Maguz-sama!"

"Tayuma, it's even more dangerous if you fall. We should work together here."

"…I understand. But please focus on protecting yourself. You are our hope."

"I shall."

The Invaders' Battlefields

Koutarou and Kiriha. Tayuma and Maguz. The two groups pointed their weapons at each other. The groups couldn't come to an agreement. There was no peaceful solution to their current standoff. Kiriha had desperately been trying to avoid that, but there was no longer anything she could do but fight.

"Let's go Koutarou!"

Kiriha took the front and began running. Even as she did, she had her naginata at the ready and kept her surroundings in mind. Kiriha was a pacifist, but now that she had decided to fight she was definitely going to win.

"I'll adapt to you, so just do as you want!"

Koutarou followed after Kiriha. As he did, he gave orders to the AI in his armor. Since he was going to let Kiriha do as she pleased, he needed to give the armor and GOL more detailed orders rather than just to support them.

"I won't let you!"

Maguz fired an arrow at the approaching Kiriha. The arrow was infused with pure spiritual energy and had spells cast on it that raised its speed and the strength of the arrowhead. Since the bow had been made under the premise that it its user would draw it while wearing powered armor, it had the power equaling a cannon.

"Nee-san!"

"It's not a problem!"

The haniwas moved to protect Kiriha, but before they could the power hidden within the naginata was unleashed. What she unleashed was the power of electricity and a huge electromagnetic field was created which threw the arrow of its trajectory.

When the arrow passed by Kiriha's arrow the sound it made was less that of it cutting through the air, but rather the air being torn apart. While nothing had happened thanks to the electromagnetic field, if the arrow had hit Kiriha would have been blown apart.

"Now it's my turn, Maguz!"

"I won't let you little girl!"

Kiriha moved to counter attack Maguz, but Tayuma stood in her way. He greatly swung his sword to cut her in half.

"Tayuma, your opponent is me!"

Koutarou swiftly swung Signaltin and a crimson blade was formed from the arc he had cut. It was a basic attack spell, and while its power was weak and it couldn't reach far it was enough to slow down Tayuma.

"Curse you brat! You're always getting in my way! I hear you got in the way in the incident eleven years ago too!"

"That's because you're always working on your evil schemes."

"Justice is with us! You are the evil ones!"

"I don't care who justice is with! As long as the many can live happily!"

While the crimson blade was stopping Tayuma, Koutarou stepped between Kiriha and Tayuma. At that time Kiriha swung down her naginata and unleashed a lightning bolt at Maguz.

"I won't let you do as you please, Maguz!"

"It's no use!"

However, Maguz didn't even try avoiding the lightning as he nocked a second arrow to the bow. That was only natural, as the moment Kiriha's lightning bolt touched Maguz' barrier it easily dispersed. Maguz' armor had been created with defense as its number one priority. Not only was he the commander, but he was also using a weapon that required him to be stationary. A strong barrier that didn't require him to move was necessary.

"That might be the case if it was just me."

"What!?"

"Ho-! You've forgotten about us Ho-!"

"Raiga you still have a long way to go Ho-!"

The next moment, Karama's and Korama's attacks assaulted Maguz. Karama used flames and Korama used lightning.

"Guaaaaaaaaaaah!?"

Scorched by the flames and shocked by the lightning, Maguz let out a scream.

Karama and Korama who lacked in power had been able to attack Maguz because Kiriha had drawn away his attention and because their bodies were small. While Kiriha was attacking Maguz, the haniwas landed on the ground nearby him. They then walked up closer to him and unleashed their attacks by his feet. Even the powerful barrier created by his armor didn't fully protect his feet in order to not obstruct his movement. With Korama's and Karama's size, it was possible to launch an attack from under that gap.

"Guuh, c-curse you! You are but mere automatic dolls!"

While the attack had reached inside Maguz' barrier, he was still wearing a sturdy armor. While he felt pains from the burns and numbness from the shock, he hadn't taken enough damage to dull his movements. If anything it was his pride that had been harmed, and with a red face he moved to counter attack the haniwas.

"He's angry Ho-!"

"I'm sure he has a scary face Ho-!"

The haniwas swiftly flew up into the air and fled out of Maguz' reach. Their humorous speech and behavior hurt Maguz' pride even more and stripped him of his calm. He sent arrow after arrow after the haniwas, but since they were swift and small he couldn't hit.

"Maguz!"

"Kuh, what an oversight!"

Kiriha's naginata collided with Maguz' barrier. The blow wasn't enough to break his barrier, but it allowed Maguz' to calm down. With that, he gave up on chasing after the haniwas and focused on Kiriha again.

"Are you in a fluster because things aren't going to plan, Maguz!?"

"That's not true at all! If I kill you here, the plans will work out just nicely!"

Maguz' drew an arrow with all of his might and fired it at Kiriha just past his barrier. Since she was so close its power wouldn't fall off. This was the most powerful attack Maguz' longbow was capable of.

"That's what you call being in a fluster."

Kiriha didn't even try dodging the arrow and simply smiled as she stood in place.

"What!?"

The arrow pierced Kiriha's chest, but in that moment, she vanished like smoke. At the same time as she vanished, another Kiriha appeared from some dozen centimeters to the side. This was the real Kiriha. The arrow had been fired at an illusion.

"That's why this happens to you."

Kiriha thrust her naginata forward, through the hole in the barrier that had been opened for the arrow. The naginata passed through the hole and struck Maguz.

"Guaaa!? Impossible, how could I possibly be led by the nose!?"

The naginata struck Maguz' left hand holding the bow, this blow shattered the armor and the bow, leaving Maguz' left hand exposed. While the hand was bleeding, the armor had protected it from the worst of it. Maguz quickly readied a new weapon.

"But it won't go like that this time!"

Maguz pulled out a large gun. Like the mechanical soldiers' guns, this could also fire magic. It was also a gun specially made for him. It was his ace in the hole.

"Take thiiiisss!"

Maguz fired his gun three times. For some reason he wasn't firing at Kiriha but in a direction where no one was standing. But the fired bullets, the fired magic, suddenly changed direction after leaving Maguz' barrier and came after Kiriha. At the same time the bullets changed into several lightning bolts. The gun fired lightning magic.

"Hahahaha, surely you can't avoid this!"

Maguz laughed loudly, convinced of his victory as six lightning bolts rained down on Kiriha. Maguz was blinded by the flash and lost sight of Kiriha.

"They'll keep on coming, Kurano Kiriha!"

Despite that, Maguz didn't stop attacking. Before the flash died down, he put his finger on the trigger. Once the flash vanished he was going to attack again.

"Though you can use magic, you're a novice when it comes to magic battles, Maguz."

But that was when something surprising happened. When the flash vanished, Kiriha suddenly appeared in front of Maguz.

"What!?"

Maguz' eyes shoot open wide in surprise. Kiriha didn't seem to have been hit by the bolts, on top of that she was inside the effective area of his barrier. He didn't know how, but Maguz had allowed for Kiriha to get inside of his barrier.

"This ends here, Maguz!"

Kiriha swung her naginata at Maguz.

"I won't let you!"

Maguz pulled the trigger to stop her.

At this distance, even if it hits us both I'll come out on top because of the armor!

He fired three times just like before. He wouldn't miss at this close of a range, and just as he had aimed the bullets headed straight for Kiriha. According to his calculations there was no way he could lose.

"…That's why I said you're a novice, Maguz."

"Whaaat!?"

That was when Maguz was surprised once more. The Kiriha that had been attacking him vanished like smoke once more. In her place, a new Kiriha appeared where Maguz had fired his first lightning bolts. The Kiriha that had been attacking him was yet another illusion. Of course, the bullets fired passed through her and flew off somewhere.

"Hahaha, which one of us is the novice!? You're hurt all over from the lightning!"

But this time, Maguz wasn't shaken. He knew that Kiriha had taken damage from the lightning bolts. Her protection had been imperfect and some of the electricity had burnt her. That's why Maguz laughed at Kiriha, once again convinced of his victory.

"A magic battle is a battle of creativity, Maguz. Since you can only think of conventional ideas, you will lose."

Despite her deep burns, Kiriha was smiling. At this point, the battle had already ended in her victory.

"Guaaaaaaaaa!"

The next moment, an explosion occurred in Maguz' armor. What exploded was the pipe supplying the armor with power from the generator. This was one of the few weak points in the armor. Having taken an attack there, Maguz' armor suffered severe damage, the barrier vanished and the armor seized its functions.

"Nee-san is a genius Ho-!"

"Nobody else could come up with this kind of strategy Ho-!"

The ones that had attacked Maguz were Karama and Korama who had snuck into his barrier. Everything had gone according to Kiriha's plan.

"Kuh, I see, so that's what the second illusion was for…"

Maguz realized he had fallen for a trap.

The second illusion was to get Maguz to open up a hole in his barrier. With him firing his gun, the armor's system automatically opened a hole in the barrier. If they could find out where that hole would open, the haniwas could infiltrate it. That was where the second illusion came in. Koutarou had created it according to Kiriha's wishes.

What Kiriha needed to fight against Maguz were two basic spells. That was all she required to overcome Maguz who was repeatedly firing higher level spells. This was a complete victory for Kiriha thanks to her creativity.

"Surrender, Maguz. Surely you can't move anymore."

Kiriha walked up to Maguz and turned the naginata on him. Kiriha was burned all over, but it didn't seem to have impeded her movement. Maguz on the other hand was unable to move now that his armor had lost power. The armor he wore was now nothing but a shackle to him.

"You should know my answer, Kurano Kiriha."

"You say the radical faction will continue fighting even without its leader?"

"That's right. While I might not be able to rule, at least we will be able to reclaim our home."

Maguz had accepted defeat but a dark flame continued burning in his eyes. His insanity continued smoldering on as embers.

"I'm sorry to hear that, Kasumi Raiga."

"No, I am Maguz. The leader of the radical faction."

"Then, Maguz, take your responsibility."

Confirming that insanity, Kiriha swung her naginata down towards him. While the blow was light, the unleashed electricity caused Maguz to faint.

"…Why didn't you use that indomitable spirit for the sake of your people…"

Thus Kiriha defeated Maguz and came out victorious. However, her expression was far from bright.

Part 9

With Maguz falling, the radical faction soldiers' movements grew noticeably duller. There were still twelve soldiers fighting, but having lost their commander, unrest spread and their morale plummeted. There were still several mechanical soldiers and automatic machine guns, but with the people using them in a panic, they couldn't exhibit their full strength. They became unable to endure Harumi's and the others' attacks and routed.

"Why, why can't we win!? We should have had enough forces! We analyzed the data from the factory and gathered a sufficient force! Yet why does this happen!?"

Maguz falling came as a huge shock to Tayuma. To him, Maguz was the symbol of absolute justice. He was a savior that would use his vast knowledge and excellent leadership to cut open a path into the future for the People of the Earth. Having lost Maguz, Tayuma was greatly shaken. Looking at Maguz and the other fallen soldiers, Tayuma recoiled and stepped backward. Unable to accept reality, all he could do was scream and shout.

"It's only obvious. You didn't take one thing into consideration."

"What is that!?"

"Kiriha-san's feelings for her friends, in other words, love."

"Love!? Preposterous! That kind of thing is unnecessary! Absolute justice is with us!"

"…You lost because you don't understand that. If you had understood how prideful of a leader Kiriha-san was you would have won."

When Kiriha fights she always tries to make sure her allies comes out as unscathed as possible. And since her enemies this time around were the radical faction, one could say that they are her allies in a roundabout way. She never forgot that. Kiriha had continued fighting so that neither ally nor enemy would suffer any casualties.

However, this fight had been different. Having been cornered, with no way to back down, she had prepared herself for some casualties both among her enemies and her allies. That was of course not her intention. If she was going to force others to sacrifice themselves, she would prepare to sacrifice herself as well. That was the only choice Kiriha could make.

As a result, Koutarou and the others were far stronger than they were in the battle at the factory. Since they didn't fear themselves or their allies getting hurt they could cross the dangerous bridges as well. That was the reason why Koutarou had said that escaping alive would be easy.

"Or maybe it's the other way around. You don't care about the lives of your allies, so you're always fighting at your limits. You're fundamentally different from Kiriha-san and the others who control and save their powers for others."

"As if I could accept something as vague as that! All that is needed is absolute justice! Rule under that will lead to eternal prosperity!"

Tayuma believed in the radical faction's justice and that Maguz would become their ruler. But with Maguz broken, his belief was starting to waver. Since he didn't want to accept that, Tayuma raised his voice. He feared the collapse of the world he believed in.

"Surrender, Tayuma. The justice you believe in is not absolute."

Koutarou turned his sword towards Tayuma who was reeling. At the same time Harumi and the others lined up behind Koutarou. Their battle had ended a short while ago. All radicals in the execution chamber, aside from Tayuma, had been neutralized.

"D-Damnit! But if I call for reinforcements—"

Tayuma began calling for reinforcements through his armor. He simply couldn't accept defeat.

"Why!? Why is nobody answering!? This is an emergency!"

However, he couldn't hear any voice from the command room he was supposedly connected to. Since he was Maguz' right hand, the operator always answered as quickly possible.

"It's no use. This base is already under the conservative faction's control."

Kiriha answered Tayuma's question. She then placed herself as to block off his retreat. She had no intentions of letting him get away.

"There is no longer anyone who will stand with you. Surrender, Tayuma. The battle is over."

Kiriha indifferently declared that the battle was over, and it wasn't just limited to the execution chamber. At the same time Koutarou and the others barged into the execution chamber, a conservative faction force infiltrated the base. They cut off the communications from the inside and occupied the command room and neutralized the base in its entirety. This base no longer had any fighting power left.

"No, not yet! This isn't over yet! Maya!"

"…Yes, yes, you really do work me to the bones…"

However, there was still one left capable of fighting. It was a woman wearing an indigo outfit. It was Maya, a magician of Darkness Rainbow who had replaced her body parts after being seriously injured and returned to active service.

The magicians and the radical faction shared technology, but they had taken a stance to not intervene with each others battles. This was a measure to make sure that they didn't get in each other's way. That's why Maya hadn't taken part in the battle, both here and in the factory yesterday.

But there was an exception to everything. Maya had two favors she owed the radical faction. One was that they had restored her body, the other was that she had received information pertaining the People of the Earth from them. In return, she had promised to lend her aid if they really needed it. She had lent her aid to rescue Tayuma, and she would lend her aid now.

"Maya!?"

"It's been awhile, boy."

Maya seemingly appeared from Tayuma's shadow and brightly smiled at Koutarou. Her smile was so cheerful that Koutarou almost forgot the situation he was in for a moment.

"But sadly, I don't have the time to play with you…"

"Maya, help me and Maguz-sama escape!"

Tayuma had called for Maya so that she could help him and Maguz escape. If they used the power of magic then they might be able to escape from this situation.

"It would be impossible for me to save two in this situation."

However, Maya shook her head. In the past she might have been able to help both of them escape, but having lost the majority of her body she no longer had that much magical power. As a result, she had lost much of her ability to respond to unexpected troubles.

"…Guess it can't be helped, just save me then!"

"Oh, you'll leave Maguz behind?"

"I still have a mean to turn this around! I can take him back later!"

"So that's what you mean. I understand."

Having realized what Tayuma meant, Maya nodded and raised her right arm. A miniature cane had been built into her right arm. She was going to cast a spell and escape.

"Koutarou!"

"I know!"

Noticing that Tayuma and Maya were going to escape, Kiriha and Koutarou charged towards them. They had to catch Tayuma to truly end this battle.

"Recall – Precast – Teleport."

However, Maya unleashed a spell she had cast ahead of time. As a result, it activated incredibly quickly and by the time Kiriha and Koutarou arrived, Tayuma and Maya were already wrapped up in the light of the spell. For the same reason, Harumi's and Yurika's jamming spells didn't make it in time.

"Fuhahahaha, this isn't over yet brat! We will definitely win! Because justice is with us!"

"…Good bye, boy. Let's meet again."

Tayuma and Maya vanished, leaving behind only the blue light of her spell. Maya had used a teleportation spell, and while she didn't have the same range on it as before, it was more than enough to escape in the case of an emergency.

"Damnit, they got away!"

"Koutarou, we can't give up yet! They should be headed towards the island!"

"I see, they're going to use the earthquake weapon!"

Tayuma's goal was to use the earthquake weapon to cause catastrophic damage to the town of Sial and to the conservative faction. At the same time, a war would break out with the surface, so the conservative faction would have no choice but to give in to the radical faction. Which would naturally force them to release Maguz.

"Let's go after them right away! There's no time to lose!"

"Yeah, everyone, let's go!"

Right after Tayuma and Maya had vanished, Koutarou and the others dashed out from the execution chamber. They had to join up with Theia and the others as quickly as possible and stop Tayuma from using the earthquake weapon.

The Ends of Ambition

Part 1

Sunday, July 4

The battle between Theia's surface troops and the radical faction soldiers protecting the earthquake weapon, Earth Dragon, was going back and forth.

The surface troops consisted of Theia, Ruth, Shizuka, Maki, the Sun Rangers and 80 conservative faction soldiers for a total of 89. This was a considerable force, but the enemy had more than twice their numbers. First of all they had close to 100 normal soldiers. Then there was also about another 100 mechanical soldiers and assault vehicles. The latter was on the offensive, putting the surface troops in a very dangerous situation.

Fortunately, the surface troops consisted of those who excelled at fighting several enemies. There was of course Theia and Ruth who could fight using space battleship weaponry, but there was also Shizuka who could fight against many on her own if she assumed her half-dragon form. Maki could use her mind manipulation magic to confuse the enemy, making them unable to use the full extent of their strength. As a result the battle was progressing evenly despite the enemy's numerical advantage.

"Ruth, have you been able to pinpoint Earth Dragon's location!?"

Theia called out to Ruth as she targeted a large tank with her large caliber beam cannon. This tank was an unmanned automated vehicle, and the moment it detected the energy from Theia's beam cannon it activated its barrier.

"Your highness, I can't detect the energy that Earth Dragon should be radiating. Considering its size, that should not be possible."

"How insolent!"

Theia repeatedly fired off beams. While the tank could withstand one shot, it couldn't withstand the second and third. The strongest land based weapon hadn't considered that it might be attacked by space based weaponry. The tank's turret was blown off and its movement stopped.

"I believe it is being shielded to keep us from detecting it."

"…So they know what we're after… curse you, Elexis…"

In order to break free from this situation, Theia wanted to destroy Earth Dragon by bombarding it with the Blue Knight's main weaponry. However, bombardment from space stood out quite considerably, so she wanted to finish it in a single attack. For that reason, they needed to pinpoint Earth Dragon's location.

The unmanned fighters that Ruth was controlling had the ability to detect and analyze energy radiated from its surroundings. Using that ability, it should be possible to locate Earth Dragon even from outside the building.

However, when Ruth tried examining it, she couldn't detect any energy from the building believed to be containing Earth Dragon. Since not even electromagnetic radiation from basic electronic equipment could be detected, it was likely that the building contained its radiation.

This meant that the building had been made on the basis that it would go up against Forthorthe's scientific analysis, but it was a possibility if Elexis was involved.

"I also have bad news, your highness."

Theia could see Ruth in the corner of her eye, manipulating her unmanned fighters to take hits for their allies. The barrier created by the fighters working together was powerful, and it repelled the bullets fired from the automated, heavy machine guns.

The Ends of Ambition

“Did something happen to Koutarou and the others!?”

Theia’s expression froze. She wasn’t worried for her own fight, but for Koutarou and the others who were out of her reach.

“No, that’s not it. The battle underground ended in Master’s and in our victory. However, one of the enemy officers escape and is headed this way. It is someone we have fought before, a man called Shijima Tayuma.”

“That awfully vile man huh…”

Theia frowned as she remembered Tayuma. It wasn’t just Theia, but none of the girls of room 106 thought well of him. He was someone that wouldn’t hesitate to attack civilians. Since Theia had been like that in the past as well, she felt very unpleasant as he reminded her of her foolishness.

“Not good, if he’s coming here after losing, he can only have one goal.”

Theia also understood what he was trying to do. He would indiscriminately use the earthquake weapon to destroy those he didn’t like. It was an attack that the Theia of the past would also make.

That’s right… my invasion was wrong… however, thanks to everyone else I was able to correct myself… I have to stop him!

Tayuma’s desires was like a ghost of Theia’s past. Because she felt like that, she was determined to stop Tayuma’s ambition at all costs.

“Your highness, is something the matter?”

“There’s no time to be dawdling around. We’re forcibly breaking through.”

As Theia said that she exchanged her weapon to a rapidly firing paralysis gun and fired at nearby radical faction soldiers. Her aim was accurate and the bullets were headed straight towards their bodies.

However, the bullets were blocked by the soldiers’ barriers. But Theia had taken that into consideration.

“Haaah!”

With the firing stopping the soldiers in their tracks, Shizuka thrust forward. She was using the Fire Dragon Emperor’s powers to transform into a half-dragon form, and was now even stronger than usual. Her powerful kick sent all soldiers in its path flying. Spiritual energy barriers were useless in front of her.

“I would love to hurry this up!”

Shizuka supported Theia’s opinion as she looked for the next enemy to defeat. There was a time limit to Shizuka’s power. While she was stronger than anyone else, she ran out of fuel quick. And once she used up her powers, her weight increased. In order to avoid that, she had to end this as quickly as she could.

“I think that’s good too. It seems like reinforcements keep on coming, and there’s a limit to my magic as well.”

As a voice came through Theia’s bracelet, Maki appeared quite far ahead. At the same time, her 20 conservative faction soldiers appeared as well, and began attacking together with her. Their target was the squad commander in the rear and the soldiers around him. The goal was to confuse the enemy by sneaking around them and attacking their commander.

“Please attack! We Sun Rangers will serve as the rear guard!”

The Ends of Ambition

The Sun Rangers were restraining the enemy through gunfire and bought time for Maki's squad to fall back. Thus all of the surface troops came to an agreement.

"Alright, then it's decided! Ruth, I'm using Combat Dress!"

"Combat Dress? But it is still in its test stage…"

"If I don't use it now, when will I!"

"As you wish, my princess. Transferring the Combat Dress."

Ruth operated her bracelet and a large space-time hole appeared behind Theia. The Combat Dress the two were talking about was Theia's new weapon. This new weapon was a machine that covered about half of Theia's body, and had a resemblance to a dress. The pure white and gold colors strengthened that impression.

The Combat Dress covered Theia's body and began tightening up. At the same time, Theia's bracelet began blinking as it began communicating with the dress.

"Engaging Legendary Weapon System series 02, Combat Dress. The dress has been put under control of the bracelet. Princess, select your accessory."

"Assault Red."

"As you wish, my princess."

A red line was added to the Combat Dress, and several weapons appeared from black holes. The newly appeared arms attached to the dress' hard points prepared for this scenario. Theia now wore a white dress with streaks of red and gold, with large cannons by her shoulders, missile launchers by her waist, a large caliber beam rifle on her right arm and a recoil-less pile driver on her left arm. This was Theia's new weapon, the Combat Dress.

Strictly speaking the Combat Dress wasn't in itself a weapon. It simply allowed Theia to fly through a flight unit on her back and served as a hard point base for the various weapons to attach to. Since the actual weapons were the same as they were before, her actual attack power hadn't changed. But wearing this dress she could use multiple weapons at the same time, and she got far more mobile.

When Theia summoned her weapons, it was difficult for her to move them around. There were some weapons that moved on their own, but there were few of those, and since they moved at various speeds it was difficult to get them to properly cooperate with her. So there, Theia made this Combat Dress. She gave it the ability of flight and fixed the weaponry to it. By doing that she could freely fly around with her weaponry. At the same time, the restrictions on the weapons lessened. In other words, the dress changed Theia into a small fighter plane.

Through the power of gravity control and boosters, Theia's body lifted up from the ground. At the same time, the safety devices on her weapons were removed. Theia was now a beast that had been unleashed. A golden king of beasts with both power and speed.

"Men, follow me!"

Quick to act, Theia charged towards the radical faction troops in front of her. Her royal crest that had been engraved into the dress stood out, even from afar.

"Leave the big threats to me! Don't bother with the small fry! Advance!"

"Theia-chan is as hasty as always…"

"Let's go, Kasagi-san."

"I'm sorry for causing everyone trouble."

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Shizuka, Maki and Ruth chased after Theia. Behind them were the Sun Rangers and the conservative faction soldiers. This was the decisive moment for the surface troop’s battle.

Part 2

The anti-material guns that Theia was firing had enough power to pierce through the barriers of the tanks and destroy them completely. If people had been inside it would have been terrible, but fortunately, they were automated vehicles. Theia could bombard them without concern.

“That makes eight!”

Theia’s bombardment destroyed yet another tank. The battle was progressing very one-sidedly as the tanks were unable to shoot at Theia who was freely flying through the air. They were easy targets to Theia.

“Your highness, gunfire is coming from the two o’clock direction!”

“Whoops.”

However, she couldn’t let her guard down. Since the soldiers and mechanical soldiers were using handheld firearms, they could target Theia. That said, they weren’t using anti-air weaponry, so accuracy was low and so was the power. Ruth would also restrain the enemy forces with her unmanned fighters at appropriate times, leaving Theia unhurt.

“We’re going to keep on pushing!”

Theia destroyed powerful weapons one after another as she advanced. On the battlefield she stood out very much. Many of the radical faction soldiers were completely focusing on her as she flew through the air at high speeds destroying the major threats.

“Everyone, take care not to split up!”

“Thank you, people from the surface.”

“Surface and underground doesn’t matter! Let’s just hurry on.”

“Yes.”

The conservative faction soldiers pushed up the path that Theia had carved for them. The Sun Rangers headed to the back of them and served as the rear guard. The conservative faction soldiers and the Sun Rangers protected each other as they continued on ahead. Thinking of them as an anti-invasion squad and invaders from the underground, this was a bizarre spectacle. However, no one here thought it was strange as they were all working together to destroy Earth Dragon.

“Hey, Aika-san.”

Shizuka looked over the conservative faction soldiers and the Sun Rangers as she was running. A smile formed on her lips and she liked what she was seeing.

“When you look at them like that, don’t you feel like Kiriha-san’s invasion of the surface succeeded a long time ago?”

“You’re right, it certainly feels that way…”

People from the surface and the underground held hands as they were working together towards a common goal. Neither side was attempting to rule over the other. They all respected and helped each other. It was the result of Kiriha’s long, hard-fought invasion. It hadn’t been a mistake to protect the pride of both parties.

“That’s why we have to win this battle.”

“You’re absolutely right, Aika-san. Justice always wins!”

Strangely enough, Shizuka spoke the same words Tayuma did. However, their meaning greatly differed. And now was the time to protect those differences. Shizuka and Maki took those

feelings to heart as they continued running. The entrance to the building was right in front of them.

Since Earth Dragon was inside this building it had been built extra strong. That was also true for the main gate as a thick metallic door blocked intruders from entering. However, after the joints had been shot by beams several times each, followed up by a recoilless pile driver, not even the strongest of doors could endure. Before the steam exhausted from the pile driver could condense, the door fell inwards towards the building.

“We’ve finally reached it…”

As expected, Theia was the first to step inside the building. Up until this point, Theia hadn’t taken a single hit, as a result, her Combat Dress was still white as always.

“Ruth, how does it look?”

“I have a reaction. But it’s still shielded, so all I can tell is that it’s forward.”

The hologram that Ruth was projecting from her bracelet showed a large circle drawn. That circle represented Earth Dragon’s expected position, but it wasn’t all that reliable.

“For starters, we only need to go straight forward? I like it when it’s simple to understand.”

“You’re right. That might be just like us.”

Shizuka and Maki nodded at each other. Aside from Ruth, the girls of room 106 gathered here all preferred simple thinking. To them, only having to move forward was a welcome development.

“Devil Princess-san, we can’t afford to take our time!”

“Hurry, Devil-neechan!”

The Sun Rangers who were serving as the rear guard took cover inside the building and were fighting against the radical faction forces. The enemy were chasing after Theia and were pouring in towards the building.

“Alright, let’s go men! Keep up with me!”

“Theia-san is so reliable at times like these.”

“Before she had a strange force behind her, but now its working for her in a good way.”

“Her highness is maturing after all.”

Theia and the others soon took action once more. With Theia at the front again, they ran down a passage. Since they would be able to get a more accurate reading on Earth Dragon’s location the closer they got, nothing good would come from standing around.

“You’ve finally made it inside, princess Theiamillis.”

That was when Elexis’ voice could be heard from a speaker in the passage. When she heard that voice, Theia didn’t stop, but her expression grew more severe.

“What is it, Elexis!”

“It’s the host’s duty to invite his guests. Well, it might be a little ill-mannered to do so through speakers though.”

“Quit spouting your nonsense!”

“For the time being, I have prepared a little entertainment. Please enjoy.”

Elexis’ sounded awfully cheerful. He had an atmosphere to him as if he really was inviting guests into his home. That might really be his intentions, but Theia and the others felt nothing but enmity towards him.

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“We don’t have the time to play around with you. We’re in a rush.”

“Then please reach me within eight minutes.”

“What a detestable fellow, just you wait, I’ll be over there to punch you soon!”

Theia was getting irritated. She didn’t like Elexis’ playful attitude nor the time limit he had given them. Theia understood that he meant that the earthquake weapon might possibly be used at this moment, but she didn’t understand his motive for telling them. Since she didn’t believe he was actually advising her, she only felt like he was making a fool of her.

“I will await your arrival.”

With that, Elexis stopped speaking. At almost the same time, Shizuka, with her strengthened senses, felt the presence of something approaching them.

“Theia-chan, something is coming. It’s just around that corner.”

“I’m detecting many metal and energy reactions, I believe it’s automated weaponry intended to defend the building.”

“So this is the so called entertainment…”

Before long, Elexis’ automated weapons appeared from around the corner. It was a crowd of robots like the clay dolls and haniwas, wearing armor. They were of a luxurious make, having been created through the underground’s spiritual energy technology and Forthorthe’s science, while also having magic imbued into it. They were specially made robots designed to defend truly important sites.

“…Not good… they’re robots, the magic I specialize in hardly works on these…”

Maki frowned as she saw the robots. She specialized in mind manipulation, which had little effect against that without a mind of its own. In other words, she would have to fight without relying on her expertise. It was a rough fight for Maki, but that wasn’t the only problem.

“Fu, fufu, fufufufu.”

Ruth’s low laughter echoed through the passage. Ruth was normally quiet and serious, and her laugh was cuter. That’s why nobody could hide their shivers as they heard this strangely oppressive laughter.

“I’ve fo~und yo~u.”

Before anyone knew it, Ruth was holding a metallic handle in each hand.

A glowing blade slowly rose from those handles. This was a treasure that Ruth always kept on her at all times. The swords of light that her ancestor Flairhan used in the legends of the Blue Knight, two beam swords.

“Vice captain?”

“Not good! Ruth, keep it together!”

“I am keeping it together, your highness. I am well aware of the situation, oh yes, very aware.”

“Aa~h, I’m staying out of this.”

“…I am really glad that Master isn’t here…”

Ruth swung her beam swords around like a tornado. Nothing caught in that tornado would survive, that was how sharp her swordsmanship felt.

“…If he had seen some specimens this big, Master would certainly be captivated by them…”

Ruth stopped rotating and glared at the group of robots. A dangerous light filled her eyes.

“That’s why I will send you to hell together with the rest of these things before Master sees you! Hercules-chaaaan!”

Ruth was exuding a strange obsession. The target of that obsession were the automated weapons that happened to have the shape of beetles. In front of that overwhelming pressure, the robots beetles that should have been simple mindless robots instinctively flinched and stepped backwards.

“Divine retributioooon!”

Ruth charged in with her two beam swords. Her movements were completely different from normal, as she moved like a predator and with overwhelming speed.

“It can’t be helped, men, support Ruth!”

Theia hurriedly began giving Ruth covering fire. She couldn’t abandon her childhood friend in this dangerous situation.

“…I don’t think she needs support.”

Shizuka smiled wryly.

Ruth had a talent for the sword thanks to her lineage. Moreover, she never missed a day of training, so her physical strength and capability had risen. The only reason she wasn’t suited for fighting was because of her peaceful attitude. So once Ruth spotted the beetles, she lost her temper and removed the problem with her personality. Transforming her into a master swordsman. Right now, she was without a doubt above Koutarou when it came to swordsmanship.

Knowing that, Shizuka smiled. However, there was still the one in a million chance, and nobody knew what would happen with Ruth enraged. So Shizuka chased after Ruth with movements surpassing the limits of man.

“So the vice captain is actually really strong with the sword…”

Maki felt admiration as she cast reinforcement and defensive spells on the two that charged in.

Maki respected Ruth as an excellent superior, but that was only respect for her ability to gather and analyze information. But right now, Ruth was swinging her two beam swords and fought splendidly. Seeing that, Maki reevaluated her opinion of Ruth. Her standing as someone from a distinguished family of knights wasn’t just for show.

“…It’s just when she’s going up against beetles though.”

In contrast to Maki, Theia was dumbfounded. As her childhood friend, Theia knew better than anyone that Ruth was incredibly scary when she was angry. However, she felt like Ruth went too far when beetles were involved. That was just how much Ruth loved Koutarou, but her expression of love was a bit too extreme. Theia was normally extreme herself, but she had an old outlook for expressions of love.

“You still continue coming!”

Whilst being supported by Theia and the conservative faction soldiers, Ruth destroyed beetle robots one after another. Facing her ruthless attacks with the beam swords, the robots were unable to do anything as they were dismantled. Only remains of robots were left behind Ruth. She mowed down the robots like a real tornado.

“…O-Oh? Why am I holding beam swords…?”

In total there had been 36 beetle robots blocking the passage. However, Ruth had destroyed all of them in just over three minutes.

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Part 3

Thanks to Ruth's unexpected performance, Theia and the others managed to get near Earth Dragon before the time limit.

"Your highness, there's no doubt. Earth Dragon is just past this door."

"I see. Men, you did well to get all this way! We're almost there now!"

The results of the energy analysis indicated that Earth Dragon was just past the door in front of them. As long as they destroyed that, their long day would come to an end. The conclusion was right before them.

"I know that it's rough. However, we're one push away! We'll destroy Earth Dragon and return triumphantly! Are you ready, men!"

Without waiting for her allies' reply, Theia use her cannons and pile driver to destroy the door. Her allies' morale was high so there was no need to wait for their response. They were covered in wounds, and their clothes were dirtied, but knowing that their battle was about to end, their feelings were uplifted. Without forgetting their strong sense of duty, they jumped into the room.

"Welcome, princess Theiamillis. And everyone else too."

Elexis' bright voice welcomed the troops. Elexis was sitting in front of a giant device, that looked like a building, in the center of the room. That gigantic device was Earth Dragon that Theia and the others had to destroy.

"Elexis!"

"…Such a bare faced lie. You're far from welcoming."

Upon seeing Elexis' face, Ruth's and Theia's expression grew stern. To Ruth, Elexis was her former fiancé who conspired together with her rivals. To Theia, he was someone who had been after hers, Koutarou's and her friends' lives.

"How harsh."

Elexis still had his confident smile. However, this wasn't because he had a means of defeating Theia and the others. He truly welcomed them in.

Indiscriminate destruction won't bring anything. I'm truly glad you came, princess Theiamillis, Ruthkania-sama…

According to Elexis' sense of beauty, senseless destruction of the surface and underground was undesirable. While restoration followed destruction, it wasn't efficient to restore something after completely destroying it. Destruction without creation, destruction simply for the sake of destruction was something that Elexis detested. However, since he had a contract with the radical faction to supply them with technology, he had to do what he was told. Now Theia and the others had appeared in front of him, which was why he welcomed them.

"Elexis was it!? Where is Maya-sama!?"

Maki held different feelings from Theia and Ruth. If she came here, she might meet with her master. That personal desire of hers served a stronger driving force than her sense of duty. That's why Maki spat out her words at Elexis.

"So you're Maki… You're serious and strong minded, just like she said."

"I'm not here to play with words! Where is Maya-sama!? She's here right!?"

"She's—"

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Elexis was about to honestly answer Maki's question. He had promised to tell her when she came after all. However before he could, he was interrupted by someone else's voice.

"I'm here, Maki."

Maya herself appeared in the room. She had been underground for a while, but she had returned right now.

"Maya-sama!?"

When she saw her, Maki's eyes opened wide. Maya was Maki's savior and her master who taught her magic. She was also the previous Darkness Navy. While they were now enemies, Maya was a special existence who she couldn't ignore.

"You're hasty as always, Maki… I even told you I'd prepare a stage for us to fight."

Maya felt the same way about Maki. While fate had turned this apprentice master pair into enemies, Maya had no intention of denying their relationship up until then. The People of the Earth's radical faction denied their history underground, and abhorred the conservative faction. Maya's and Maki's relationship was clearly distinct from that.

"Are you planning on destroying the surface and the underground, Maya-sama!?"

"I don't really have any intentions to do that… but my accomplice seems to, so I probably will end up doing so."

"That's right!"

One more appeared in the room. It was Shijima Tayuma. The radical faction commander who had escaped from the underground with Maya.

"The surface and the underground will be destroyed and a new history will rise from the ruins! The People of the Earth will reclaim their home and lead mankind to the next stage! What a brilliant history it will become!"

Tayuma was set on using Earth Dragon. By spreading mass destruction throughout the underground and surface, the People of the Earth will be forcibly dragged into war. Doing that will remove the meaning of the People of the Earth fighting amongst themselves. Doing that would allow for Maguz to return and with him in the center, a new order would be constructed. A correct rule by those superior which the inferior would obey. A bright future supposedly awaited the People of the Earth.

Achieving that future was justice. And for the sake of that justice, any and all means were allowed. The sacrifices created from the use of Earth Dragon was but a small problem for the great cause.

"We won't let you, evil invader! We Sun Rangers will stop you for the future of both the surface and the underground!"

As Red Shine bravely spoke, the five Sun Rangers took a stance. Their appearances wasn't as awkward as they had been before, but was now the unmistakable appearances of heroes.

"The sun will light up our future!"

"Fuhahaha, if you want a bright future then just shut up and watch! Well, either way you're already too late! Earth Dragon is already activating! You were too late!"

Tayuma grinned a laughed triumphantly. The time limit Elexis had mentioned was almost up. Once it had finished charging, Earth Dragon would activate, and this battle would end with massive sacrifices on both the surface and the underground.

"Sorry for keep you waiting, Theiamillis-san."

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“I was running out of patience, hand it over to me!”

“I’m already working on it.”

However, Theia hadn’t given up yet. She was talking to Clan about something.

“What are you trying to do little girl!? Even if you attack now, you won’t be able to destroy Earth Dragon before it activates!”

Small attacks wouldn’t stop the earthquake weapon now. Even if everyone joined up to attack, they wouldn’t make it. Tayuma who was convinced of the radical faction’s victory sneered at Theia.

“No, we’ve won.”

“What!? What’s the point of a loser barking now!?”

“Your highness, the coordinates have been input into the fire control system.”

“Fool, did you think that what you see is all there was to my power!?”

Theia smiled. It was a violent predatory grin she’d only show to her enemies. That wasn’t the smile of a loser, but of a beast.

“Blue Knight, bombard the surface coordinates! Give them a taste of your main weaponry!”

“As you wish, my princess.”

Since the people on the surface weren’t stupid, repeated attacks from space would cause them to notice the Blue Knight. That’s why the Blue Knight only had one shot at bombarding. And in that one shot they had to make sure they destroyed Earth Dragon. For that reason, Theia and the others needed to get closer to the weapon so they could send the geographical data to Clan who would calculate the bombardment point. And now, the steel knight floating in space swung down its sword towards the surface.

Rather than a sound, it was more like a shock-wave and vibrations. The main weaponry that the Blue Knight had fired was a massive beam cannon. The fired beam came from straight above and pierced through the roof of the building and through Earth Dragon. Since the beam far surpassed the speed of sound, the air moved at supersonic speeds and created a shockwave. As the beam impacted, the ground shook violently. It was like an earthquake had struck.

“W-What is this!?”

While being shaken by the shockwave and vibrations, Tayuma stood aghast. He couldn’t believe what he was seeing. A massive pillar of light had pierced through the ceiling and Earth Dragon. The pillar of light had only appeared for a short moment, but the results of it was anything but minor. Black smoke rose from the hole the pillar of light had torn up, and it was obvious that the inside had suffered massive devastation. In fact, the control computer was screaming that Earth Dragon had lost its function.

“Just what is going on!? Is this truly reality!?”

Tayuma stepped backwards and fell onto his butt. Tayuma couldn’t believe it, and admitting this to be reality was the same as Tayuma admitting that the radical faction had lost. It was only obvious he couldn’t accept it.

“There was neither an explosion nor any spreading. The results are just as Clan-sama simulated.”

“Splendid indeed. Well done, Clan.”

“This might sound strange coming from me but… I can’t forgive someone who would attack their own home country. I’d help as much as I could.”

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Blue Knight's bombardment had been elaborately calculated by Clan.

Since Earth Dragon was a weapon intended to create a massive earthquake it stored extraordinary amounts of energy. When bombarding, one had to take care not to cause an explosion.

After analyzing the blueprints they had found in the factory yesterday, Clan had determined where to shoot to avoid causing an explosion while causing it to lose function. Once Theia and Ruth determined Earth Dragon's position, Clan obtained the data needed and she forwarded it to the Blue Knight. Clan's calculations were accurate and the fired beam caused Earth Dragon to seize faction and it also didn't cause any secondary damage.

"How does it look Elexis."

"It's no use. They've hit only the magical power and spiritual energy converter. With this it won't be able to properly move due to insufficient energy. Even if we activated it… it would only have an intensity of two on the Richter scale."

Elexis who was operating the control computer dropped his shoulders as he gave up. What the Blue Knight had shot was the part that converted magical power into spiritual energy, it was essentially the heart of Earth Dragon. According to Elexis it would take at least two weeks to repair. Earth Dragon had practically been rendered useless.

"N-No way, I won't accept this kind of result!"

"Woah."

Tayuma pushed Elexis aside and began messing around with the computer. Elexis made room for Tayuma and dropped his shoulders once more as he looked at Maya. Maya herself smiled wryly and tilted her head. Unable to accept reality, Tayuma desperately tried to move Earth Dragon. But Elexis and Maya knew that his efforts were in vain and the results were just as the two had expected.

"Damnit! Why, why won't it work!"

Tayuma hit the panel he was operating. The panel broke and was rendered unusable, but it wasn't really a problem since Earth Dragon wouldn't move anyways.

"Why does everyone side with them!? We're the ones who are right! This is just the oppressed trying to reclaim their rights!"

Tayuma finally accepted the reality that Earth Dragon had been destroyed, but his feelings were still rampaging. Tayuma couldn't accept that they had lost.

"Surrender, Tayuma!"

"There will be no surrender! We are prideful People of the Earth!"

Tayuma clearly rejected Theia's demand of surrender. He would rather choose death than be humiliated. Tayuma and Kiriha were the opposite on everything, except for their pride.

"Elexis, Maya, can't we do something!? Is this it for the radical faction!? Do we have no choice but to vanish as we're chained to the underground!?"

The days of glory should have begun from this point on. The People of the Earth would return to under the sun and they would prosper for all eternity under their ruler, Maguz. That would then lead all of mankind to the next stage.

Yet that future was about to be sealed away. At this rate they would have to return to the darkness or merge with the people on the surface and vanish. Both ways seemed like ruin to Tayuma, so he continued struggling to avoid that conclusion.

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“…There is one way.”

“Maya?”

Elexis looked at Maya, who had suggested an alternative to Earth Dragon, with a perplexed expression. He hadn’t heard anything about this.

“That’s it! I’m counting on you!”

In contrast, Tayuma had a pleased expression. He wanted to rely on any hope he could. Regardless of the outcome, as it was better than losing to the conservative faction.

“However, I can’t guarantee your safety. With that you might win, but you won’t come out unharmed.”

“I don’t care! Losing here is the same as dying anyways! I would gladly give my life for the glory of the People of the Earth!”

“If you have that kind of resolution, I’ll do it.”

Maya raised her right arm over her head. As she did, her magical power began flowing out from the miniature cane built into her right arm. And using that overflowing magical power, she called forth even more magical power. That magical power was what they would have used to create an earthquake with Earth Dragon. Enough magical power to shake the earth had gathered.

“Not good! We have to stop Maya-sama!”

The magician Maki knew just how terrifying that much magical power was. It was clear that just causing it to explode would cause something terrible. That’s why Maki transformed her cane into a sword and charged Maya. Since she was using magic to strengthen her body she moved as quickly as a bullet and she instantly closed in on Maya. Maki raised her glowing red sword and swung it down towards Maya.

“Maya!”

However, before the sword reached Maya, Elexis stepped in front of her to cover her. He used the barrier generation device he was wearing to protect Maya.

Maki’s sword and Elexis’ barrier collided. Unable to withstand Maki’s blow, Elexis’ barrier collapsed. It had exceeded its damage tolerance and the generation device broke down. Since it wasn’t the kind of barrier used in armor, it couldn’t withstand Maki’s attack.

“Move!”

“Woah!?”

Maki pushed away Elexis and attacked Maya again.

“Permanent Metamorphose – Modifier – Over Drive.”

However, Maya finished her spell before Maki could attack. All of the magical power that Maya was manipulating poured into Tayuma.

“Kyaa!?”

The aftereffect of the activated spell blew Maki away. That was just how massive the magical power that Maya was controlling was. Tayuma who was now in the center of that magical power didn’t know what was happening.

“M-My body is hot! Maya, what is this!?”

Enveloped in orange light, Tayuma anxiously looked around him. Since he had no knowledge of magic, he felt some fear regarding this unknown phenomenon.

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“Tayuma, your body is changing into something else. Imagine what you desire. The spell will respond to it.”

“So that’s how it is! Fuhahaha, I can tell that there’s an enormous power inside of me!”

By understanding and accepting the situation he was in, the magical power started flowing into his body. His body began glowing orange as he absorbed the magic. And once he had absorbed all of the magical power, the glow reached the point where no one could look straight at it.

“I can win, with this I can win! I have obtained the ultimate power! I have become the true supreme existence!”

What Tayuma desired was immortality and omnipotence, and finally overwhelming power to force others to obey him. They were the three required elements for a dictator to rule forever.

Tayuma’s body grew stronger in accordance to his ambitions. The orange colored magical powered altered his body and made it larger. In that process, the armor he was wearing broke. However he no longer needed armor. He had gained a power that far surpassed his armor.

“Maya, what did you do to him?”

“I allowed him to freely use the magical power that had been gathered within Earth Dragon. Nothing more, nothing less. He’s free to do whatever he wishes. His appearance is what he himself desired.”

Elexis and Maya gazed at Tayuma who was transmogrifying together. Even as they talked, Tayuma’s body swelled greatly. He was already over ten meters tall. Tayuma’s desire for power didn’t know when to stop.

“I see. But Maya… why did you feel like helping him again? I thought you didn’t like the way he did things.”

“I still don’t. However, if he’s going to take the risk himself it’s not as bad. And besides, we’ve known each other for a long time.”

“So it’s something like your final parting gift?”

“Oh? Do I look like someone that is so considerate?”

“Yes. I also like that strange sense of obligation you have.”

There, the two turned their back on Tayuma. They were going to leave this to him while they escaped. They already fulfilled their obligations to them. The rest was Tayuma’s problem, and besides, the two had their own goals. Now was the time for them to leave.

“Are you serious? I’m sure you’ve tricked a lot of women with that side of you— what’s this!?”

However shortly after the two had started walking away, Maya sensed strange presence behind her and hurriedly turned around. Her eyes shot wide open in surprise. She saw Tayuma, but his appearance had far exceeded Maya’s expectations.

“What!?”

Noticing Maya’s behavior, Elexis turned around as well. As he did, he too saw Tayuma’s appearance. The light from Tayuma’s body had at some point changed from an orange light. Though calling the light black might be wrong, that was the only way it looked like to Elexis. Inside that black light, the giant Tayuma was changing from human into something else, seemingly a four-legged beast.

“I don’t know what he did, but Tayuma is summoning power from a higher dimension!”

“A higher dimension’s power?”

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“I think it’s the power of a god or a devil! Or he himself might be trying to turn into one! Either way, this is dangerous, we should get away from here right now! Air!”

“Okay, let’s go!”

Maya and Elexis turned their back on Tayuma again. They didn’t know what he was trying to become, but it was clear that staying her could only have a negative outcome.

Maya hadn’t been the only one to notice the abnormality with Tayuma. Once he surpassed ten meters in length, Theia ordered her allies to retreat. The room where Earth Dragon was in was large, but it was still too small for them to run away from a giant, and once Tayuma’s body began emitting black light, she didn’t hesitate to order a retreat. He was now an unknown opponent, and his gigantic figure was over ten meters tall. If they were going to fight, they would need to do so in a more open place.

“A-Aika-san, what is happening to that Tayuma person!?”

The half-dragon Shizuka noticed the abnormality with Tayuma right away. Because she did her confusion was far from small.

“It seems like Maya-sama used the magical power within Earth Dragon to transform him… but during the transformation it seems like some other power has begun influencing him… it seems like he’s turning into an unexpected monster…”

Maki was puzzled too. While the magical power was vast, Maya had only used a transformation spell. The activated magical power had been the correct orange color. However, for some reason the power changed to black during the transformation. An impossible event when it came to normal magic. However, Maki recognized this impossible event.

That black magical power… it looks like when I stole the power of room 106, but… could this be the same…?

The black power enveloping Tayuma looked familiar to Maki. Last year, when Maki attacked room 106 for the first time, she had managed to gain control of a fraction of the power gathered there. The color of the magical power at that time was black.

But why is that here… no, it’s too rash to assume they’re the same… but it’s the truth that a massive amount of magical power and a twisted desire has summoned forth a similar power… could I have been turned into a monster as well…?

Back then, Maki had come into contact with black magical power, though at a smaller scale. She also felt a lot of hatred and anger. If Maki had used the magical power on herself rather than others, she might have transformed into a monster like Tayuma. She felt chills just thinking about it.

“What is it Maki? You’re falling behind.”

“Theiamillis-san…”

Deep in thought, Maki’s running speed slowed down. Noticing that, Theia grabbed Maki’s hand and began running together with her. Feeling the warmth from Theia’s hand, Maki let out a sigh of relief.

The current me is alright… I won’t become absorbed by that!

In the past when Maki had come into contact with the black magical power, Theia had bombarded her with the Blue Knight. But now, Theia worried about her when she was feeling anxious and held her hand. Hate begets hate and friendship begets friendship, knowing that she no longer had any fear. She squeezed Theia’s hand back and increased her running speed.

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Theia and the others encountered several squads of radical faction soldiers before they could reach the exit of the base. However they knew that Maguz had lost, that Earth Dragon had been destroyed and that an unknown monster had appeared inside the building. Moreover, their chain of command was in disarray, so they didn't know what to do. So they decided to stay a certain distance away from Theia and the others and escape the building. They wanted to avoid the risk of battling against Theia and the others when they didn't understand the situation. The radicals had families too, and they wanted to avoid dying for no reason. Of course, Theia and the others wanted to get away as quickly as possible so they didn't attack.

"Phew… we finally made it outside."

"Ah!?"

"Kenichi, where are you going!? That monster is coming!"

Once they got outside the building, Red Shine parted with the others in the group. Blue Shine hurriedly tried to stop him but he didn't return.

"There are injured people here! Help me out!"

Red Shine had parted with the others because he had found injured people that couldn't move. Since it would be dangerous leaving them be right now, he had rushed over to help.

"But Kenichi-niichan, those are radical faction soldiers."

"And what about it!?"

The other four Sun Rangers hesitated for a moment because the injured were radical faction soldiers. However, after Red scolded them, they soon came to his side. That was when many conservative faction soldiers joined them.

"Sun Rangers, we'll help too."

"That'll help!"

The Sun Rangers and conservative faction soldiers worked together to carry the injured. Since there weren't that many injured, there wasn't much of a problem. The one to stand out the most at this time was Yellow Shine. He carried an injured on each shoulder. That was when one of the conservative faction soldiers looked up at him with admiration and called out to him.

"…You Sun Rangers are a strange bunch."

"How so?"

"To think you'd help not only us conservatives but also these radicals…"

"Ahaha, that's thanks to Kenicihi-kun's influence."

"Red-san's?"

"When we'd do something that would make children cry, Kenichi-kun would get furious."

"Make kids cry… you really are heroes of justice."

"We always strive to become that. Now, let's go! We can't fall behind!"

"Yes!"

Having picked up the injured, they began running away. While they should have supposedly slowed down from carrying injured people, their steps were surprisingly light.

Part 4

¨The outside of the building was bright. While they were still in the cave, there was a large light in place of the sun, so it was actually brighter than inside the building. Theia and the others continued running while lit up by that strong light, but they stopped half ways to the exit.

“Maki, how does it look?”

“He should be coming out soon. His magical power is still increasing.”

“The problem is how big he’ll be when he gets out…”

Theia and the others had stopped because they were going to intercept Tayuma here. If they continued escaping, Tayuma would follow suit and reach the surface. If that happened it was clear that there would be a lot of casualties. So Theia and the others had to defeat Tayuma here.

“I’ve got a reaction on the sonic sensor! Your highness, he’s coming!”

The next moment, the front half of the base collapsed together with a roaring sound. With that, Theia and the others could see Earth Dragon from where they were standing. And from the rubble of the collapsed building, something was slowly standing up.

“How could this be…”

“What is that!? He’s over 50 meters no matter how you look at it!”

Theia was at a loss for words and Shizuka screamed. That was only natural as what stood up was just too large. Since he was able to cover Earth Dragon which was right behind him, it was clear that he was over 50 meters tall just like Shizuka had said.

“According to the observation results he is 55 meters tall. His weight seems to be around 3,000 tons but because of gravitational interference I can’t get an accurate figure.”

What had once been Tayuma had now transformed into a black hound. His sharp fangs and claws, and muscular body gave him the silhouette of a hunting dog. That alone was a surprise, but his size was abnormal. The black hound far exceeded the size of living creatures. Alunaya who resided within Shizuka was also quite large, but this was twice his size.

“…What a monstrous dog… it at least seems his loyalty towards Maguz was real…”

According to Maki, Tayuma had transformed into the appearance he himself desired. In that case, Tayuma might have chosen the appearance of a dog as a display of his loyalty. Theia believed that while Tayuma’s soul was stained by elitism and dictatorship, his loyalty towards Maguz was the real deal.

“However, we can’t let him prove his loyalty! Blue Knight, bombard the surface 15 meters south of the previous coordinates!”

Theia ordered her spaceship to bombard the black hound. Just one glance at his gigantic stature was enough to tell that the black hound’s strength was beyond common sense. So Theia wanted to defeat him before he started moving.

“Please wait, your highness! If you bombard the surface so many times then the people of this planet will—”

“Now isn’t the time for that Ruth! Believe in me!”

However, that was a big gamble. Repeated bombardments would attract the attention of the people on Earth. Theia was of course well aware of that. However, she believed the bombardment was needed, regardless of the risk.

“Fire! Blue Knight!”

“As you wish, my princess.”

Theia pushed away Ruth’s objections and forced the bombardment. Ruth didn’t try stopping Theia any further. She understood that Theia had put some proper thought behind her actions.

The air trembled as the second bombardment arrived. The beam opened up another hole near the first one and poured down on the black hound.

“Gaaaaaaaaa!”

However, the black hound wouldn’t go down without a fight. After roaring, a disc made from black energy appeared above it. It was a shield created using the black magical power. The shield stood in the way of the oncoming beam.

That was when something unexpected happened. The black shield reflected the beam like a mirror reflects light.

“It was reflected!?”

“Your highness, the beam is headed towards the Blue Knight!”

“Impossible!”

The beam travelled back the same route it came and hit the Blue Knight.

“The Blue Knight automatically deployed its distortion field, there is no damage.”

“Theiamillis-san, it seems like that dog twisted space to change the direction of the beam.”

“…Geez… what outrageous things he can do…”

Theia smiled wryly at Clan’s explanation. While there hadn’t been any direct damage, if the Blue Knight’s main weaponry wouldn’t work, it was hard to imagine normal attacks would. That meant that Theia’s power wouldn’t be able to defeat the black hound.

“Fuhahaha, that won’t work! I’m the strongest! I’ve obtained an invincible body and I have become one of the chosen ones!”

Tayuma’s body endured an attack that could destroy Earth Dragon in a single hit. Unable to hide his excitement for his new power that surpassed his own expectations, Tayuma instinctively let out cheers of joy.

“I will crush you, and make a new world! The powerless surface dwellers won’t be able to stop me!”

His voice didn’t come from his throat. Having become a dog, his throat lost the ability to use human speech. Instead his voice spread throughout the area using magic.

“…You fool. Even if you’ve gotten a large power, who would obey you when you look like that…”

Theia looked at the black hound, at Tayuma, with pity in her eyes. Looking back at history, there had been no cases where rule through fear had lasted for long. Tayuma’s current appearance couldn’t be seen as anything but a symbol of fear. So even if he were to rule the surface, he wouldn’t last for long. Both Forthorthe’s and Earth’s history proved that.

“…Having obtained a great strength, you’ve closed the path to rule on your own…”

Victory was no longer an option for Tayuma. Even if he beat Theia and the others, and ruled the surface, it wouldn’t be anything but a short-term victory. Theia thought that was just so pitiful. However, she was happy at the same time. People would be happier if they remained unaware that their future had been closed off.

“Maki, don’t you have any counter measures?”

However, Theia had no intentions of being dragged down with Tayuma after he had chosen ruin on his own. She would defeat him. There, Theia sought Maki's advice as it seemed like physical attacks wouldn't work.

"Either we could dispel the magic or break through with spiritual energy."

Seeing the black hound twist space with a spell, they could either dispel the magic itself, or attack using spiritual energy which was less affected by the twisted space.

"I think only Kasagi-san can fight against him right now."

"Eh? M-Me!?"

"More accurately she means me. I'm going at this with all my might, Shizuka!"

The Fire Dragon Emperor Alunaya far surpassed the human limits when it came to both magical power and spiritual energy. The only way to overcome this situation was to have Alunaya go all out.

"I guess we have to… do it, uncle!"

Shizuka steeled herself. While she would end up in a bothersome state if Alunaya used up all of his magical energy, now wasn't the time to be concerned with that. If they left the black hound be, the surface would become a mess.

"…I just hope I alone will be enough…"

Alunaya activated his stored magical power and enveloped Shizuka's body, and using her body as the core, he created his own gigantic body using magical power. At this stage, Alunaya was in control of her body while Shizuka's mind would give advice. In other words, they had control of their body when it came to their own sizes. Thus Shizuka turned into a red dragon over 20 meters tall and caused the ground to shake as she landed.

"Looking at him like this he sure is spectacular. This is the first time I've seen a land-dwelling creature larger than me."

Facing the black hound, Alunaya instinctively sighed. Alunaya was close to the physical limit of land-based creatures. Yet this black hound was twice his size. It was an abnormal gigantic body forcibly created through magic. Since this existence was outside of the rules of nature, even Alunaya couldn't hide his surprise.

"Uncle, we have to hurry."

"You're right, I can't just be surprised."

Alunaya couldn't maintain his dragon body for that long. He had to finish this before he ran out of magical power. Alunaya took a deep breath and took one step forward towards the black hound. And just as Alunaya was about to throw himself towards the black hound, something happened.

"Please wait, Alunaya-san."

"Oh, princess Clan?"

"Reinforcements, Bertorion, has come."

"Curse you Blue Knight… you've left me behind to go ride something so fun-looking again."

Passing through one of the holes in the ceiling, an airframe with very sharp angles flew into the large cave. While it might have been 20 meters big, that was only its longest part, and it was far too small to compete with the 50 meter tall black hound. The signs and characters engraved into the airframe belonged to the People of the Earth. This airframe was a mobile weapon intended for air battles that the conservative faction had developed just in case.

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Part 5

Upon entering the cave, the surroundings grew bright. Since they had been flying through the night for a while now, the sudden light stung Koutarou's eyes.

"Ho-, applying the filter Ho-"

"We'll remove it when your eyes have gotten used to it Ho-. Don't worry Ho-"

However, Karama and Korama who were attached to the airframe's computer lowered the brightness of the monitor, which helped Koutarou's eyes adjust.

"So that's Tayuma, huh… he's completely turned into a monster."

"I'm sure it's a sign that he wanted great power, and to show it."

Thanks to Clan's detailed reports, Koutarou and Kiriha knew what had been going on inside the cave. That's why they had come over on this airframe.

"Koutarou, it looks like Yurika joined up with Theia and the others."

Sanae who was sitting on the operator's seat reported on Yurika's whereabouts. Koutarou looked at the monitor near Sanae and saw Yurika and Theia and the others happily reuniting. It was footage from a camera attached to the outside of the airframe.

"Good, it looks like everyone is okay."

Harumi showed a smile of relief as she saw everyone was still full of energy.

There were a total of four humans on this airframe. First there was Kiriha who was sitting on the pilot's seat. She was in charge of controlling the airframe. Next, Sanae was sitting on the operator's seat. However, Sanae was simply sitting there, Karama and Korama were the ones doing the actual work. Since the haniwas were directly connected to the computer this airframe didn't need an operator. The remaining two, Koutarou and Harumi, were sitting on spare seats. The two were so-called passengers and were unrelated when it came to controlling this airframe.

Kiriha and her two haniwas were in control of this airframe. That was the design in mind when it was being developed.

While one might be fooled by their cheerful personalities, these two haniwas that had served the Kurano family for generations had accumulated a huge amount of combat data. Therefore, giving them appropriate armament, they would be able to fight incredibly effectively. And this mobile weapon was that 'appropriate armament.' It was a warfare module the haniwas would use in the case of large-scale combat.

That warfare module had been given the name O-hime. This airframe that had been given the name of the goddess of creation was the conservative faction's ace in the hole. Their goddess of hope that would allow them to witness the sunrise of tomorrow.

"But we can't get carried away Ho-. The output isn't increasing Ho-"

"Our souls aren't enough Ho-. We're a hundred years too early Ho-"

However, this airframe was still incomplete. As a result, the main systems and spiritual energy generator couldn't be turned on. It was currently moving using its subsystem and a standard generator, and it was only barely able to fly. While it wasn't too far off, it wasn't in a state where it could be used to fight.

The reason why the main systems and spiritual energy generator couldn't activate was simple because there wasn't enough spiritual energy. The spiritual energy of the two haniwas serving Kiriha wasn't enough to awaken the systems. At this rate, the airframe would prove useless, with its only use being to crash into the enemy.

“Don’t worry, that’s why Sanae is onboard.”

“Me? Why?”

With the topic having suddenly turned to her, Sanae blinked in confusion. The haniwas on the other hand knew just what she meant, and began dancing cheerfully like they’d already won.

“I see, as expected of Nee-san Ho! I never thought of that Ho!”

“With Sanae-chan’s maiden powers it might move Ho-”

“Sanae, could you touch the magatama in front of you and transform into Kabutonga?”

“Sure… but would that do something about the design error?”

“Probably. Please, Sanae.”

“Okay… Traaa~nsform! Kabutongaaa!”

Along with an energetic cheer, Sanae’s body was wrapped in a vast amount of spiritual energy. It’s massive density turned a portion of it into light and caused Sanae’s body to glow. What Kiriha meant by transforming into Kabutonga wasn’t to have her change her outfit, but to enhance her physical strength with her spiritual energy.

The Ends of Ambition

“It’s coming, it’s coming online Ho-!”

“The main systems have activated Ho-!”

Sanae’s vast spiritual energy passed through the magatama and into O-hime’s systems. That was when the panel that had been inactive began lighting up one after another.

“It works Ho! The spiritual energy generator is active!”

“Its output is rising, it’s gone critical, it is now self-sufficient Ho-”

As the spiritual energy generator began moving, the airframe vibrated a little.

At first it was a gradual vibration similar to a human’s pulse, but it soon hastened into something more like an alarm bell. Once the vibration reached a certain point, the shake stopped all at once. The vibration control device was cancelling the vibrations.

“Output is still increasing, 30… 40… 50… switching the generator from normal power to spiritual energy Ho!”

“Ane-go!”

“Yes! Mode change, change O-hime from cruise mode to combat mode!”

“Roger Ho-!”

“Leave it to us Ho-!”

O-hime had two modes of operation. One was a cruise mode where most functions were limited. The other was the combat mode which required an enormous output of energy from the spiritual energy generator.

“Let’s go everyone, make sure you’re strapped in!”

Kiriha changed O-hime into combat mode and removed all restrictions. As a result, its speed rapidly increased and it moved in a complex way similar to a roller coaster.

Part 6

Since he had once been Tayuma, the black hound had knowledge about O-hime that was approaching. It was information gained through Maguz. That's why he knew that Kiriha was onboard the moment he saw it.

"You've come, Kurano's daughter! You dare stand before me again!"

The giant black hound shook his body and roared. It was a roar so loud that it shook the entire cave. Tayuma's voice could be heard from that roar, but since he had lost the ability to use human speech, it was spread through the use of magic.

"As long as you would harm people, I will stand in your path as many times as I have!"

"Harm people? You're wrong, I am trying to lead the People of the Earth! To reclaim our former days of glory!"

"You haven't noticed!? You are trampling the people that you are trying to lead!"

"What!?"

The black hound looked down at his feet for the first time. Many corpses lied buried in the rubble of the collapsed building. They were all radical faction soldiers that had been entrusted to defend the building.

"You are not trying to lead anyone! You are only using them as a footstep!"

"What about it!? I am a chosen ruler! Together with Maguz-sama I will rule everything! I decide who lives and who dies!"

However, the black hound, Tayuma, had no remorse over killing his own allies. Having transformed into a magical beast due to his distorted wish and gained enormous power, he single-mindedly strived to fulfill his own desires. To Tayuma, the radical faction's justice, his loyalty to Maguz and his ideals of dictatorship were nothing more but tools to justify himself. He would bring it out when he had to, and put it away when it got in his way. He was now a horribly distorted personification of selfishness.

"…Have you degenerated this far, Tayuma…"

Kiriha couldn't help but feel disappointment in Tayuma. Maguz also had distorted, insane, thoughts, but he still felt a connection to the other radical faction soldiers. While he had twisted goals and thoughts, he still had the pride of a leader. But Tayuma did not have that. He did everything for himself. If there was a truth he didn't like, he would use any means to force it away. Against a person like that, words had no effect. Kiriha felt her own limit and decided to defeat Tayuma.

"Kurano's daughter, I decide if you live or die as well! And you will die hereee!"

The black hound roared again. As he did, several black orbs appeared around his body. Once the black hound roared once more, the orbs charged straight at O-hime. They were energy balls created using the black magical power.

"I won't let you! This world is not your playground!"

Kiriha piloted O-hime to evade the oncoming black orbs. O-hime moved like a roller coaster and the contrail it left behind were like the rails.

"Come on, what's the matter!"

While Kiriha evaded the black orbs, the black hound created new orbs constantly with no end in sight. As a result, Kiriha had to constantly focus on evading.

"Emergency alert Ho! The spiritual energy generator is becoming unstable Ho-"

The Ends of Ambition

“At this busy time!?”

And then additional problems pile on. Having sortied with the incomplete O-hime, troubles occurred as it was suddenly forced to fly at full power. As a result, O-hime’s movements became much simpler as abnormalities occurred in the generator, leaving O-hime without the power needed to make drastic turns.

“Fuahahahaha, dieeeee!”

Black orbs assaulted O-hime in that state. Their numbers were twice of what they had been before. The black hound was going to use this chance to completely destroy O-hime. At this rate most of the orbs would score a direct hit. The black hound had the power to reflect the Blue Knight’s beam, so if this many orbs were to hit, O-hime would be completely blown away without leaving a trace of its existence.

“Restarting the spiritual energy generator Ho!”

“Sanae-chan, please Ho-!”

“Guuutsss!”

There, Sanae still sitting on the operator’s seat raised her spiritual energy and sent in a vast quantity of spiritual energy into O-hime, waking up the generator.

With the generator activated, O-hime began accelerating rapidly, with the help of Sanae’s spiritual energy, its speed went even faster than before. As a result they left most of the assaulting black orbs in the dust.

“Not good Ho!”

“There’s one globe we just can’t evade Ho!”

But there was just far too many orbs and they couldn’t shake off one of them. The orb charged towards O-hime at full speed.

However in the end, the black orb didn’t hit O-hime. An ultra high temperature flame had evaporated the orb before it could hit.

“It’s our ally Ho!”

“It’s the monster uncle Ho!”

The haniwas displayed the origin of the flames on the computer’s monitor. There they saw crimson dragon flapping his large wings.

“Alunaya-dono!”

“Blue Knight, I shall fight with you.”

While they were some distance away, Alunaya’s voice came from the crest on Koutarou’s right hand. The Fire Dragon Emperor Alunaya had come to help Koutarou and the others. In this situation, having someone with great power like Alunaya helping was really reassuring.

“Curse you, over and over again…”

The black hound raised an irritated voice seeing Alunaya and O-hime line up next to each other. Tayuma couldn’t conceal his anger as certain victory was stripped from his grasp. Since similar things had happened several times today, he was especially angry.

“Now it’s our turn! Open the port to the Spiritual Energy Cannon!”

“Yes Ho-! Transmitting power to the cannon, five seconds until fully charged!”

“Sanae-chan, we’re counting on you again Ho-”

“More spirit?”

“No, not that Ho-. You can guide the cannon with spiritual energy Ho-”

“I don’t really get it, but I only need to hit him right?”

“Yes Ho-”

Being a warfare module for the haniwas, O-hime was of course armed. Its main weaponry was the Spiritual Energy Cannon. O-hime had two of this weapon installed into it. This weapon was a beam weapon that directly fired the massive amounts of spiritual energy being generated. Since the fired beam was raw spiritual energy it should work on the black hound.

“Alunaya-dono, we’ll attack first! Please back us up!”

“Understood.”

Alunaya could fly fast for a living creature, but it was slower than O-hime. So the highly maneuverable O-hime would take the front and Alunaya would cover for them.

“We’re charging in! Fire the cannon as we pass by!”

Typically speaking, energy weapons lost power the further they had to travel. So Kiriha decided to make use of O-hime’s mobility to bombard the black hound from point blank.

“Sanae, please!”

“Roger that! Sparkling Sanae-chan Cannon charged up to 120%!”

Kiriha accelerated towards the black hound. In response the black hound created black orbs in an attempt to keep O-hime away. Standard weaponry had no effect on the black hound nor the orbs so Kiriha would need to evade it all with her piloting skills.

No matter how much power you’ve gained, your mind is still human…

Having transformed into a black hound, Tayuma had obtained massive powers and an accurate perception. However the mind controlling it was still that of a human. Kiriha read Tayuma’s habits and evaded the orbs by moving around bewilderingly.

With Alunaya covering them from orbs that they couldn’t fully evade, O-hime closed in on the black hound without getting hit.

“Now, Sanae!”

“Hiiiiit hiiiim!”

Fire spewed from the two Spiritual Energy Cannons. These weapons which were directly connected to the generator of O-hime held exceptional power. While they can’t be repeatedly fired, their power is comparable to the Blue Knight’s secondary weaponry.

“As if I’d let you!”

The black hound created a jet black shield to protect itself like it had from the Blue Knight’s attack. However, that was where something unexpected happened. The two beams changed their trajectories as if they had a will of their own and went around the shield to directly impact the black hound’s body. This was thanks to Sanae’s guiding.

“Guhaaaaaaa!?”

Suffering direct hits from the beams, the black hound let out a roar of pain. A large hole opened where the beam had hit and a large amount of blood came pouring out. The beams had more of an effect than expected.

“It’s working Ho! But this is bad Ho!”

The Ends of Ambition

“A new barrier has come out Ho! It’s black, but it looks like Spiritual Energy Field Ho!”

A black fog spread out as if to cover the black hound’s body. It was a new means of defense that the black hound had devised after being unable to stop the attack with his shield. If the haniwas were correct it was a spiritual energy barrier, but it was pitch black unlike the yellow colored barrier the haniwas used. As a result the black hound looked even more eerie.

“What!?”

Blood drained from Kiriha’s face. If the black beast was being protected with shields against both magic and spiritual energy there was nothing they could do. When it came to total energy, the black hound overwhelmed them, so if two energies of the same type collided, the black hound would come out on top.

“What do you mean!? He wasn’t just strengthened by Maya’s magic!?”

“Satomi-kun, that Tayuma person has knowledge about spiritual energy devices, so I think he has recreated them using ma— Kyaaa!?”

A big impact shook O-hime. Kiriha hadn’t been the only one aiming for her opponent as they passed by each other. The black hound fired an orb he had prepared before hand towards the rear of O-hime as it passed by.

“The Spiritual Energy Field has collapsed! The first and second layer of armor on the starboard rear side have suffered serious damage, but it was just the primary armor Ho!”

“We’re barely safe, but we’re out if another one hits Ho! Be careful Ho!”

Fortunately, O-hime had survived the blow. They were lucky that O-hime had a barrier of its own and that only a single orb had hit. However, this kind of luck wouldn’t last forever. If the same thing happened again, they would be shot down for sure.

“Sanae, please!”

“Leave it to me!”

Kiriha turned O-hime around and fired the Spiritual Energy Cannon at the black hound again. Though there was a bit of distance, the beams easily diffused and disappeared as they came into contact with the new barrier.

“Karama, Korama, how does it look!?”

“Calculations complete Ho! I’ve been able to calculate the field’s strength from that attack Ho!”

“We’re in a pinch Ho! Even if we fire from point blank with maximum power, we can’t break through that field Ho!”

The second attack was performed to decide on how they would fight. The results looked bad and even if they continued to try and bombard the black hound, there was no hopes for victory.

“Kiriha-san, what do we do!?”

“If we fight individually we have no chance of winning. We’ll need to work together.”

“…It’ll be hard.”

“I know. But we can’t let that up on the surface.”

Koutarou and Kiriha both understood the situation. In order to defeat the black hound they would need to walk a very thin line. But even then they couldn’t allow the black hound up on the surface. The two nodded and made their final gamble.

Part 7

The plan Kiriha had thought up was extremely rash, and well suited to be called a final gamble. That's why when Koutarou conveyed the plan to Theia and the others, what he got as a response was dumbfoundedness.

"Are you an idiot?"

"Would you rather I act smart and let that up on the surface?"

"Well, that's true, but…"

"We have to try something. Please help."

"Okay. But don't forget."

"Forget what?"

"That there are many that would grieve if you four were to die."

"I'll keep that in mind."

The plan Kiriha had come up with put the four onboard O-hime in the greatest risk. That's why Theia worried for their safety.

"The other side is okay. All that's left is us."

After finishing talking to Theia, Koutarou stood up from his seat. He had an important job to do. As Koutarou headed to leave the cockpit, Kiriha called out to his back.

"I'm sorry for making you do something like this, Koutarou."

Kiriha spoke with an apologetic tone. She couldn't stand that the plan she had devised put Koutarou in danger. However, she had no choice if she wanted to protect everyone. She hated herself for having created a situation where she would have to see Koutarou off.

"Don't worry about it."

Koutarou on the other hand seemed carefree. A person he treasured said she needed him. So Koutarou would do it. If he didn't he might be able to stay safe, but he would surely regret it. Perhaps even more than if he were to die. Knowing that, he had no problems accepting this risk.

"Aren't you scared? If you fail you'll—"

"That's true for anyone when that time comes. In that kind of situation, you wouldn't say anything irresponsible."

"Koutarou…"

"Besides, I've decided to believe."

As Koutarou opened the hatch to the cockpit, Koutarou turned around for a moment and smiled at Kiriha. Seeing his expression, Kiriha felt just how determined Koutarou was.

"That our future definitely won't be a dark one."

That was something the girls of room 106 had told Koutarou. Treasuring someone meant believing in their future with them. You don't just have to protect their lives and promises with them. It doesn't matter what you do. The most important thing of all was hoping in a future together in the process of it all. And those emotions were properly conveyed to Kiriha.

"Then I will believe as well. That yours and mine, and everyone else's future will be a shining bright."

That's why Kiriha saw Koutarou off with a smile.

The Ends of Ambition

There was no way this was the end.

Kiriha's and everyone's happy days would begin from now.

That was what Kiriha now firmly believed.

Having exited the cockpit, Koutarou went on to leave O-hime. Using his armor's gravity control he walked on the airframe itself. His goal was O-hime's nose. Being 20 meters, it didn't take long for Koutarou to reach it.

"That said, this still is reckless."

With Koutarou walking on top of the airframe, O-hime's velocity dropped quite a bit. But even then it was still several hundred kilometers per hour. While he wasn't blown away thanks to his gravity control and barrier, this was normally a place you wouldn't stand on. The cutting sound of winds past the barrier were already thunderously loud.

"It's not like this is the first time."

"That's true."

As Koutarou got into position, Sanae-chan clung onto his back, leaving Sanae-san behind in the cockpit. As Sanae clung onto Koutarou, O-hime made a sharp turn and the black hound came into sight. That black hound, Tayuma, had two barriers around his body, with many spheres floating around him, as he waited for O-hime and Alunaya to come. Having confirmed that, Koutarou extended both hands towards the black hound.

"Blue Knight, give me my swords."

"As you wish, my lord."

"Come! Signaltin! Saguratin!"

"Call sign confirmed, coordinate axis fixed. Commencing transfer of Signaltin and Saguratin."

A black hole appeared in front each of Koutarou's hands. One sword appeared from each of the holes. From the right hole was the silvery sword Signaltin. From the left hole was the golden Saguratin. They were the swords Koutarou used.

"It is possible to use Garb of Lord."

"Give me that too."

"As you wish, my lord."

Having grabbed a sword in each hand, another six holes appeared. What appeared from those was GOL split into six parts. The parts flew out from the holes and merged with Koutarou's armor.

"Master, this ship, the Blue Knight, will pray for your fortune and glory in place of the nation of Forthorthe. And Princess Theiamillis and Guardian Knight Ruthkania both await your safe return from the bottom of their hearts."

Communications with the Blue Knight ended with a message from Ruth.

"Thank you."

Koutarou gave his thanks to the message and readied his swords. He held Signaltin in his right hand forward, and Saguratin in his left hand slightly behind it. The tips of both swords were pointed towards the black hound.

"Theia, how does it look on your end?"

With his own preparations complete, Koutarou called out to his friends.

The Ends of Ambition

“There are no problems. We had some problems with getting the timing right but it looks like it will work out.”

“How about Alunaya-dono?”

“I only have to rampage, so my job is easy. Though Shizuka is crying that her weight will increase.”

“I’ll comfort her later.”

“Please do.”

With his friends preparations also complete, Koutarou finished by calling Kiriha.

“Kiriha-san, the preparations are done.”

“I understand. I’ll be ready in just a moment as well.”

As Koutarou reported that preparations were complete, Kiriha replied with a firm voice. As expected, since this would determine the faith of the People of the Earth she couldn’t hide her tension.

“Don’t get too over eager, you’re not just too kind, but you’re too serious too.”

“You’re the only one who’d say that.”

“You can rely on others every once in awhile too.”

“I’ll do just that.”

Some of the tension left Kiriha’s voice. Satisfied by that, Koutarou glared at the black hound in front of him. The black hound was about 50 meters tall, but when it came to length he reached almost 100. The black hound was about five times bigger than O-hime. It was like an adult and a child. It wasn’t someone they could beat if they went at him from the front. Koutarou and the others had to gather their strength to stand a chance.

“Koutarou, my preparations are done as well.”

“Then let’s start.”

“Everyone, here we go! This will put an end to all of it!”

Along with her powerful declaration, Kiriha began accelerating O-hime. Her target was of course the black hound. Kiriha charged at him with O-hime at full speed.

“So you’re coming, Kurano’s daughter! I don’t know what you’re planning on doing, but it’s all useless! I am stronger than anything! Not even the goddess of creation could defeat me!”

The black hound slammed one of his large legs down as if to threaten Kiriha. The black hound and O-hime were some hundred meters apart, but with O-hime’s speed it wouldn’t take many seconds to reach the black hound.

“Maki-chan!”

“Yes!”

The Ends of Ambition

“Magic Shield – Modifier – Effective Time Twice!”

“Greater Lightning Reflexes!”

As Kiriha charged in, two spells were cast on Koutarou. They were cast by Yurika and Maki and increased his armor’s defenses and Koutarou’s reflexes. Both were needed to protect him.

In that moment, O-hime reached the speed of sound and broke through the sound barrier. The roaring sound created by this shook the entire cave and enlarged the holes in the ceiling.

“Then I shall go too.”

Using that as his signal, Alunaya took action as well. A blue light suddenly enveloped his crimson body. It was a magical light that Alunaya had activated. The light grew stronger and stronger and eventually covered Alunaya’s entire body.

“Here I come.”

The blue light suddenly vanished and Alunaya who should have been inside had vanished as well.

“W-What!? Why is he here!?”

“Isn’t that obvious! It’s to defeat you!”

Alunaya had used a teleportation spell. Using that spell, he had jumped inside of the barrier to challenge the black hound to close-combat.

“I was surprised by your sudden appearance but in the end this is the extent of your powers huh!”

“Nuuuuu!”

However, in close-combat, Alunaya was at a disadvantage from the very beginning. Being half the hound’s size, there was a clear gap in power. There was also a limit to how much magical power he could use, so filling that gap with magic was difficult.

“How foolish, to think you’d challenge me with such weak powers!”

Because of the overwhelming difference in physical strength and weight, Alunaya was easily shaken off. The black hound distanced himself and was going to finish Alunaya off with his black orbs.

“You are the foolish one… No, that girl’s head just might be too sharp…”

“What!?”

“Tayumaaaa!”

That was when Kiriha flew past Alunaya and charged towards the black hound.

“It’s no use! Your attacks have no effect on me!”

The black hound sneered at Kiriha. His magical and spiritual energy barriers were sturdy and had the power to block any attacks Kiriha and the others could use. That’s why there shouldn’t be any problems even if O-hime was charging him.

“I don’t know about that! A few seconds ago, nothing we could do would have any effect!”

“What are you say— What!? How!?”

Something impossible happened in front of the black hound. The barrier had indeed stopped O-hime’s charge. But the supposedly stopped O-hime was gradually pushing through the barrier.

“What did you do!?”

The Ends of Ambition

“I haven’t done anything. This is your doing, Tayuma.”

“Mine!?”

“That’s right. It’s nothing special. You undid your own barrier. To throw away Alunaya that is.”

This was the reason why Alunaya had challenged Tayuma to close-combat.

If Alunaya made it inside the barriers, the black hound would without a doubt throw him out of it. Taking plasma flames at that close of a range, even the black hound would take serious damage. And in order to throw Alunaya out, part of the barriers needed to be undone for a moment. All of that was part of Kiriha’s plan.

And before the barriers could completely recover, O-hime would charge in through the gap. Koutarou was standing on the nose of O-hime, wielding his two swords. The two swords were gradually dissolving the barriers.

If the barriers had been complete, the two swords probably wouldn’t have stood a chance. But thanks to Alunaya, the barriers had been opened. In other words, this was a strategic victory for Kiriha.

“So that’s how! However, I haven’t lost yet!”

The black hound ordered the black orbs floating around to attack. O-hime had stopped moving to break through the barrier. If it gets attacked now, it would definitely be destroyed.

“…Winning in the true sense of the word is not allowing for your opponent to realize that they have lost until the very end.”

However, the black hound had already fallen for Kiriha’s trap. As the black orbs were sent towards O-hime a bright flash occurred, blinding the black hound. It was a flash that Harumi, still onboard O-hime, had created.

“Guaaaa!?”

The black hound himself was the one guiding the black orbs. Having suddenly lost his sight, he was unable to lead them towards O-hime. As a result, the majority of the orbs flew into unrelated directions. A few remained on a collision course with O-hime, but Alunaya erased those with his flames.

“Theiamillis-san, the space distortion rate has fallen. Attacks should be able to hit now.”

“So it’s finally time for the star’s appearance.”

Theia had waited for this moment from the very start. While Theia’s attack power was high, her weapons wouldn’t work until the jet black shield was broken. However, now the black hound’s impregnable defenses were on the verge of collapse. With a fearless smile, Theia ordered Ruth.

“Ruth, we’re using the Blue Knight’s anti-surface missiles.”

“What about the settings, your highness?”

“Leave guidance to optics and gravity, AI will be in charge of the detonation. I’ll leave the other parameters to you.”

“As you wish, my princess.”

Eight space-time holes appeared around Theia. The next moment a missile flew out from each of the holes. The missiles were far bigger than Theia. These were powerful missiles normally used against bases or large-scale weaponry.

“Greater Enhance Weapon – Modifier – Multiple Targets.”

“Anti-Magic Shield – Modifier – Area Effect Large.”

Yurika and Maki cast spells on that group of missiles. Maki used a spell to increase their attack power and Yurika used a spell to protect them. The already powerful missiles grew even stronger thanks to the effects of the spells and flew straight towards the black hound.

“…You might think…”

While seeing the missiles off as their rockets ignited, Theia folded her arms and spoke.

“That we look dangerous, having powerful weapons or capable of using magic.”

The orbs rushed towards the missiles to shoot them down. However, the missiles were not that big and they had a defensive spell cast on top of them. As a result only two of them were destroyed. The remaining six soared through the air and directly struck the black hound in an instant.

“But in reality, the most dangerous one is Kiriha. While she has almost no power of her own, she comes up with these extraordinary ideas, one after another.”

The black hound’s barrier had weakened but still functioned to a degree. As a result, two of the six missiles were redirected and sent flying back towards Theia and the others.

“If it’s Kiriha, she might be able to beat 100 armed men with a stick.”

However, the returning missiles changed direction once more on their own. Being guided weaponry, all they had to do was rely on their guidance. The jet black shield was close to invincible against beams, laser and bullets, but less so against missiles.

“I’m glad Kiriha-sama is on our side. It would be a nightmare to go up against her…”

Having made it through the jet black shield, the group of missiles headed towards the next layer of defense. It was a spiritual energy barrier made from a black fog. However, spiritual energy barriers tended to be quite weak against physical attacks. There, the AI ordered the missiles to detonate before coming into contact with the barrier.

“You’re not kidding. I’m sure he feels the same way right about now.”

Amongst the two redirected missiles, only one managed to make it back. As a result, five missiles exploded near the black hound. These missiles had been designed to direct all of their explosive force forwards, and while these missiles were powerful to begin with, with the help of magic they were even more so, and these explosions now assaulted the black hound. The group of missiles turned into five spears of flames and pierced through the black mist and the black hound himself.

Part 8

The black hound, Tayuma, couldn't believe what had happened to himself. He was supposed to have obtained great power and transcended the powers of man. In fact, he was overwhelming all his enemies. They were easy to destroy were he to fight them one by one. Yet Tayuma had been struck by an attack and had fallen to the ground. The damage taken was severe and he couldn't even create a barrier to protect himself.

"It can't be… this can't be reality! I've obtained great power! I was chosen by god to be a ruler!"

Tayuma screamed out, not because of his injured body but because of his injured pride. He would rather die than not have everything go his way. For that sake he had obtained power to fulfill his selfish desires. Yet he had still fallen, and that reality seriously hurt his pride.

"This is some kind of mistake, this can't be happening! It's all a mistake!"

In order to protect his pride, Tayuma tried his best to stand up. He could still stand his body's pain. He had to beat down his enemies to wipe away the harm done to his pride. The black hound's body obeyed his will and staggeringly got up.

"Tayuma, you still plan on fighting?"

Kiriha who was looking at him from her cockpit inside O-hime felt like he was no longer in a state where he could fight. And him choosing to fight once more wouldn't affect the overall outcome. As a pacifist, Kiriha didn't want to fight any more.

"Of course I will! I'm the ruler! I won't ever back down! I won't cajole anyone! Because I am a hero of the People of the Earth!"

However, Tayuma was set on protecting his pride. Not the pride of the People of the Earth, but his own.

Before, Kiriha and Daiha had refused to surrender because it might affect the outcome of the battle. What they protected were the People of the Earth, and the pride of not betraying their own comrades. That's why if the conditions had been different, Kiriha and Daiha might have surrendered.

But that wasn't the case for Tayuma. He would rather die than accept defeat. He was like a child that would flip over a game board because he hated losing. Tayuma would probably never surrender regardless of the situation.

In the end, Tayuma was just a child. That's why he was desperately searching for a method to avoid losing even now. He moved his dog head around in an attempt to find something he could use to turn the tables.

"T-That's right! You were here!"

What Tayuma found were the radical faction soldiers that had been guarding the building. The soldiers hadn't joined in the battle, but rather watched over it from a distance.

"What are you doing?! Hurry up and fight! Protect me, kill them!"

There were still plenty of soldiers left. If they were to attack Theia and the others, the situation might be overturned.

"Aaahhhh, the monster turned this way!"

"Isn't he after us!?"

"We'll be killed! Just like the second platoon!"

However, the soldiers didn't try fighting. In fact, they did the opposite as they ran away in all directions in fear. Not a single one remained to fight for Tayuma.

The Ends of Ambition

“Where are you going!? Stay and fight! Did you get scared of the enemy!?”

Tayuma didn’t understand what was going on. Just a while ago, the soldiers had moved like a part of his body whenever he gave them orders. The respect, loyalty and tinge of fear they directed towards him felt comfortable. However, that didn’t happen now. Instead they scrambled to get away. All Tayuma could imagine was that they couldn’t hear his voice, or that they had gotten scared of the conservative faction.

“You don’t understand, Tayuma?”

Kiriha knew just what the soldiers were so scared of. She also felt it was pitiful that Tayuma couldn’t.

“The soldiers… are afraid of you.”

Tayuma’s voice had reached the soldiers. He had enough magical power for that. However, they didn’t know that voice belonged to the monster in front of them. Since they didn’t know Tayuma had transformed into a monster, they ran away, scared of the giant, roaring hound. What was worse that they had witnessed the black hound trampling their allies when it broke out from the building. That’s why the thought that the black hound was on their side never entered their minds. They had only been observing the battle in hopes that the black hound that had killed their allies would be defeated.

“You’re lying! I am a ruler! A hero of the People of the Earth that will lead mankind together with Maguz-sama! And they fear me!?”

“If you cared even the slightest for your allies, this wouldn’t have happened. Yet you chased after your own justice and power. That’s why no one will obey you.”

When Maya had given Tayuma power, he had only thought about himself. That’s why he chose a massive body and frightening appearance. It was the image of Tayuma’s rule. The appearance that embodied violence and fear. The soldiers couldn’t stand it and ran away.

That’s why Kiriha believed that if Tayuma had held back on his power a little and shown some consideration to his allies, he might have become a ruler in the true meaning of the word.

“Lies, all lies! You guys, stop running! Come back and fight!”

Tayuma repeatedly called for the soldiers. However his shouts turned into roars in the hound’s throat. To the soldiers it was the howl of a devil. Tayuma’s voice was erased by that howl and was unable to reach the soldiers’ hearts.

“I will execute all of those that will not obey the ruler of absolute justice! I can still forgive you now, so come back and fight!”

Having gained the black magical power, Tayuma accomplished his ideal rule in an instant. However in the blink of an eye, the heart of the people left him and his rule collapsed. Tayuma had only been a hero or a ruler for a few minutes. It was all too transient.

“You don’t understand even after I have said this much!? Then die! All of you die!”

Tayuma spit black flames from his mouth and attacked the escaping radical faction soldiers.

He might have already lost his sanity. Despite having power fit for a ruler, he couldn’t win against Kiriha and his allies were running away. He didn’t like anything of it. That’s why he wasn’t even aware that he was attacking his own side. He was simply trying to deny all of reality.

“Kiriha-san!”

“I know!”

The Ends of Ambition

Koutarou's voice coming from the comms happened at almost the exact same time as Kiriha sharply turned with O-hime. She was going to protect the radical faction soldiers. Though they had been enemies just a moment ago, the radical faction were still People of the Earth.

"Karama, Korama, remove the limiter from the Spiritual Energy Cannon!"

"Roger Ho!"

"But it will break right away Ho!"

"That's fine! I am not alone!"

Those words were the defining difference between Kiriha and Tayuma. Kiriha loved people. She knew the meaning of loving and being loved. That's why people followed her. Theia and the others, the Sun Rangers and the conservative faction soldiers all followed her. They were all moving to protect the radical faction soldiers before Kiriha could say anything. On top of that, the radical faction soldiers that hadn't been attacked joined in as well. They also wanted to save their allies.

"Why!? Why don't you obey me!? Why obey that girl!? Don't misunderstand, I'm the stronger one! I'm the amazing one! Swear loyalty to me!"

The people's actions rubbed Tayuma the wrong way. All of the people there now rejected Tayuma. Or more accurately, they affirmed someone other than Tayuma. The reason for their rejection of Tayuma was as a result of wanting to protect their allies.

Part 9

Surprisingly enough, standing at the front of the people were the Sun Rangers. Being an official anti-invader squad, they had received official training, including training in rescue and first aid. Amongst the people present, they were the most skilled and they were taking the lead in treating the injured.

“Daisaku, can you help me move that rubble? There are people under it.”

“Okay. Kotarou-kun, can you help Megu-chan in my place?”

“Hayato-niichan, can you carry this person on your own?”

“Leave it to me. I’m stronger than I look, I’ll be fine.”

“Okay, so leave Megumi-neechan to me.”

“Thanks, Kotarou-kun. Can you clean that person’s wounds?”

“Kenichi-kun, let’s go.”

“Yeah, let’s!”

Theia and those not injured were protecting the Sun Rangers and the others. They were carrying rifles and fired at the approaching black hound.

“Hey, Theia-chan, do guns even work against someone that big?”

“We can save thinking about that until later. Or would you rather we run away without doing anything and let them die?”

“…I understand. I’ll work hard too.”

“Vice-captain, are you sure we should have given the radical faction weapons too?”

“Let’s think about who they are after we’ve survived.”

“You’re right. I’ll think about it then.”

Those who protect and those who are being protected, their standpoints varied. The conservative faction, the radical faction, underground people, magicians, aliens. All kinds of people stood there without any difference between them. Who they were was no longer a problem. They would protect those around them in order to save as many lives as possible.

“Why does no one listen to what I say!? Don’t you understand that I am an absolute existence!?”

Tayuma grinded his teeth as he looked at the people. Not wanting to accept what he was seeing, he spat out black flames towards them.

“You don’t get it at all. Tayuma, you’re a good for nothing whining about nothing going your way.”

O-hime stood in the way of the flames. Koutarou who was standing on the nose of O-hime swung Signaltin and erased the black flames. Signaltin broke down the magic making up the flames.

“Brat, everything started going wrong when you appeared! It’s all your fault! If only you weren’t here!”

“Now it’s my fault? You’re not even going to consider reflecting on your own actions?”

“I am justice! Absolute justice does not require reflection!”

“…There really is no saving you…”

Koutarou sharply glared at Tayuma and readied his two swords. He wouldn’t allow Tayuma to do anything else. He wouldn’t let him touch Kiriha, or anyone else. A fierce anger surfaced inside of Koutarou as he faced Tayuma.

The Ends of Ambition

“You’re the one who can’t be saved! Dieee!”

Tayuma felt the same way, and the selfish anger inside of him turned into black flames and was spewed from his mouth.

“Kiriha-san!”

“Here we go, Koutarou!”

The next moment, O-hime charged towards Tayuma. O-hime flew at full speed as it bombarded using the Spiritual Energy Cannon. It was a continuous bombardment far faster than before thanks to the limiter being removed. It was only a matter of time before the circuits of the cannon fried. However, Koutarou made his next move before that happened.

“Satomi-kun, attack whenever you like! I’ll match your timing!”

“Koutarou, Love Love Sanae-chan Sword is charged to 500%! Feelings wise!”

“Blue Knight, allow me to lend you my remaining magical power. I’ll pour into the crest.”

“Karama, Korama, reverse the spiritual energy generator circuit! Supply Koutarou with energy through Sanae.”

“Got it!”

“Leave it to us Ho-!”

The two swords in Koutarou’s hands began glowing. It was a dazzling silver and gold light. However, for some reason that light had a gentleness and warmth to it. It was the opposite of what could be felt from the black flames.

“Die, die, dieee! Fall before the great ruler!”

Grudge, jealousy, hate, greed, insanity, and many more dark feelings shone in Tayuma’s eyes. The black flames that he spewed were like his exposed soul.

“Alone, no matter how great power you’ve obtained! Or what you intend to do with that power!”

Koutarou raised both swords above his head at the same time. Silver and golden light stretched from his sword and extended towards the surface. After ascending for several hundred meters they spiralled together and formed a single pillar of light. The gold and silver colored mixed together shone as brightly as the sun.

“You are no match against the hundreds of us!”

Koutarou then swung the swords down towards Tayuma. As he did, the pillar of light fell down towards Tayuma. It was a sword of light formed from the power of many. The light of dawn that would tear up the darkness.

“This is a lieeee!”

Tayuma screamed. The flames he spat out were erased in the blink of an eye. He tried creating another barrier, but the magical power itself that he needed was erased by the light.

The power of the sword of light exceeded Koutarou’s and the others powers. Even if Koutarou’s and the others energy was gathered, the total energy of that sword of light was in a different league. It was a power that responded to the calls of their gathered power. Or it might be like Koutarou had said that it was the light of hope born from the people desperate to survive.

“I stand at the top of all things, I will become the great ruler! The name Shijima Tayuma will be engraved in the annals of history!”

“Don’t worry. That wish will come true. You will be recorded in history… as a bad example that is.”

The Ends of Ambition

“Uaaaaaaaaaaa!”

The sword of light swung down on him. The light had no attack power whatsoever. However, it was very effective against the black magical power that Tayuma was using. Tayuma’s black hound body was created through that black magical power. As the light came into contact with his body, they were both annihilated and Tayuma’s body was erased.

The Ends of Ambition

Part 10

Since Tayuma's body had been completely changed by magic, once his magical power was counteracted by the light, his body was completely dissolved and he lost form. However, his obsession with living barely kept him existing in the world of the living.

"Haa… Haa… Haa… I refuse, to die… Haa… Haa…"

Having lost his body and existed only as a soul, as a ghost, Tayuma didn't need to breathe. But his obsession with living made him do so. As such he had a ragged breath as if he had barely escaped with his life.

"…I won't die… Haa, Haa… I'll survive, a-and stage my comeback. I'll eventually kill, Kurano's daughter, and that brat with my own hands… Haa, Haa…"

That strong grudge, desire to live, and obsession with power were more than enough to allow him to exist as a ghost. At this rate it seemed like he would be able to become an evil spirit and realize his desires.

"…"

"Hmm? Who is that, calling for me…?"

That was when Tayuma turned around as he felt like someone was calling for him.

"There's no one here… oh, what's this?"

There was no one behind him, but instead there was something strange. It was a small, black whirlpool floating in the air. The whirlpool was only a few centimeters big at first, but it gradually grew bigger. As Tayuma peered into it, confused, it was already close to a meter in size.

"…What is this…? I can tell it's a whirlpool, but…"

With a perplexed expression on his face, Tayuma heard a voice once more.

"…"

"Eh? Is this whirlpool talking? Or is someone inside?"

"…"

"Collecting? What are you talking about?"

"…"

"A reaction to the alteration of the principle of causality? Replenishing expended energy? Don't tell me that. That has nothing to do with me."

"…"

"Quit messing around! I have things I have to do! I'll kill them and— Uwaaaaaa, stop, stop it!"

The black whirlpool began spinning faster and dragged Tayuma's body in. At first he had resisted, but as the speed went up, the strength of the force dragging him in increased.

Finally, Tayuma was dragged into the whirlpool. The ever growing whirlpool was now over ten meters big and Tayuma spun around the whirlpool as he was slowly dragged towards the center.

"Noooo, Maguz-samaaa! Kurano's daughter! I don't care who, someone save me! No! I want to continue living!"

Tayuma desperately struggled to break free from the whirlpool, but its force was overwhelming and his efforts were in vain. He repeatedly screamed for help, but no one appeared in response to his calls. Tayuma slowly fell towards the center of the whirlpool.

The Ends of Ambition

“I… I don’t… want to—”

Reaching the center, Tayuma suddenly disappeared. Having reached the center he was dragged under. Tayuma was dragged into somewhere not here and completely vanished from this world.

“…”

Having dragged Tayuma in, the whirlpool began shrinking. From ten meters to five, and eventually reaching a few centimeters. From there, the whirlpool vanished in an instant. Either it shrunk to the point where it could no longer be seen or it simply disappeared. All that was clear was that the black whirlpool took Tayuma out of this world.

Tayuma probably didn’t even have the time to realize what had happened to him. However, that might have been for the better. He was probably happier not knowing that he had died.

Kiriha's Invasion

Part 1

Saturday, July 10

As a result of Tayuma's disappearance, the radical faction's armed uprising began reaching its end.

The leader, Maguz, was captured and their ace in the hole, Earth Dragon, was lost. Having lost two pillars of faith, the radical faction rapidly lost their morale.

Moreover, the radical faction soldiers that had played a part in the decisive battle regarding Earth Dragon had agreed to disarm themselves, which also played a big part. They seemed to have realized something in that battle and became strangely cooperative with the conservative faction. It also seemed like their hate for people on the surface had lessened and they had stopped claiming that all surface dwellers should be killed.

While the soldiers that had taken part of the decisive battle were an exception, this spread to the soldiers in different places that disliked fighting. As the radical faction fought, they realized that they were pointing their guns at their own people. In other words, the People of the Earth finally understood what war was.

If Maguz and Earth Dragon had been present then the radical faction's morale might have been sustained through charisma and power. But sadly both had fallen into the hands of the conservative faction. In that situation there were few of the opinion that they should continue fighting and the desire to reach a ceasefire increased. As a result, about one week after the armed uprising, the battle between two factions of the People of the Earth reached its conclusion.

Though the battle had ended, Maguz hadn't bent his beliefs. His belief that a military invasion and a rule by those superior was necessary hadn't changed just from losing to the conservative faction.

But upon learning of the fate Tayuma met, he toned down a little. The fact that the radical faction soldiers had rejected rule by one with superior strength shocked him. Even if the reason for that was in Tayuma, it was true that Maguz had worked Tayuma into his system of rule. Regardless, it was a serious problem that shook Maguz' legitimacy. Because of that, Maguz stopped his aggressive assertion of his theory and indifferently waited for his punishment.

It wasn't until then that Maguz that Raiga, finally responded to his father's request to meet. Those who heard about that whispered that Raiga might still barely have the heart of a man.

Kouma had been horribly depressed since he learned that his son was Maguz. To the point where he had attempted suicide as an apology after learning that Raiga had been captured. However, Karama and Korama had been able to stop him just before and his attempt ended in a failure. Having failed his suicide, Kouma requested to retire. By leaving his position as Daiha's attendant, he wanted to take responsibility for his son's actions. However, Daiha and Kiriha stopped him. There was no one as excellent as him around, and both Kiriha and Daiha wanted Kouma to continue working for the sake of the People of the Earth. Kouma accepted that and continued his work as Daiha's right hand. Yet Kouma decided to return his salary, this was the least he could do to take responsibility, as a father.

The government on the surface honored their promise. That promise was that in exchange for their cooperation with the conservative faction being small scale and unofficial, the conservative faction's existence would be tolerated in the case that they won.

As the Sun Rangers reported on the conservative faction's victory they were told that their vacation was over and to return immediately. As a result, the Sun Rangers left at the same time the battle ended. Their reason aside, the way they left was very hero-like.

Kiriha's Invasion

As the Sun Rangers left, the government really left the People of the Earth alone. As a result, the People of the Earth and the government on the surface distanced themselves from each other, and paid consideration to one another to not cause any disturbances. Disturbances wouldn't benefit either party. In other words, they were neighbors who didn't associate with one another, but it was also the best means to allow both to prosper.

Like that, the relationship between the People of the Earth and the surface government reached a conclusion, but the Sun Rangers would come visit the underground from time to time. This wasn't something their superiors had ordered, but rather they had decided to cooperate with the People of the Earth on their own. They didn't want to abandon something part-ways through, so it was also for their own sake. With their battle with the People of the Earth, they had spare time on their hands again. Rather than twiddling their thumbs at their base, they wanted to help the People of the Earth. While they no longer had any enemies, they still remained hero-like.

And perhaps that was why whenever they would visit, many would welcome them, the children in particular. The children had been told of the Sun Rangers' heroism from the adults and had respected them like true heroes. While that embarrassed the Sun Rangers, since the children always smiled at them, they motivated themselves by saying that they would protect those smiles.

Part 2

With the radical faction's armed uprising, the People of the Earth had reaffirmed that battle wouldn't give birth to anything. That's why they would continue peacefully invading the surface, but with even more eagerness than before. At the same time, the radical faction had surrendered and they could now explore a more realistic way to protect the pride of the People of the Earth. Apparently the radical faction would be putting effort into passing down the People of the Earth's unique culture.

Thus, after surviving many dangers, the People of the Earth returned to their peaceful everyday life. And thanks to that, Daiha and Kiriha could spend more time as father and daughter.

"Kiriha."

"Yes."

"Now that the battle has ended… what will you do now?"

With the radical faction's riot having died down, the current state of tension had vanished, and someone other than Kiriha could serve as the commander for the surface invasion. That's why Daiha wanted to return his beloved daughter to a life fit for someone her age.

"I will return to the surface. I have an important job, and important friends there."

However, Kiriha was intending to continue her job as commander of the surface invasion. That was the most important thing to Kiriha right now. Having heard his daughter's answer, Daiha burst out laughing.

"Hahaha, be honest. You want to return to that Koutarou boy."

"I'm going back to Koutarou. My place is by his side."

Kiriha clearly asserted herself without hesitation. She had spent more than ten years for that cause. She would also sincerely work towards their peaceful invasion. It wasn't something that Kiriha needed to hide from her father and she smiled proudly.

"Then go. With that reason, she would surely be satisfied too."

Daiha nodded and looked at the photo hanging off the wall. Pictured was a younger Daiha and Kiriha, together with the woman that was Daiha's wife, and Kiriha's mother.

He had complex feelings as a father, but if Kiriha was heading for the surface because of her first love, then it could be called a life fitting for a girl of her age. With that reason, even Kiriha's mother would have approved of Kiriha continuing her position as commander of the surface invasion.

"Yes, then I'll be going."

Kiriha smiled and looked at the photo together with Daiha. Her mother was smiling in the photo, and Daiha and Kiriha smiled the way they had in that photo. That's why Kiriha believed that her mother was smiling at them from the heavens.

Ever since the battle with the radical faction had ended, Kiriha hadn't shown herself in room 106. It was clear that this was because there was cleanup to do. But after a week had passed, even Koutarou began feeling lonely.

When he woke up or got home from school, Kiriha wasn't there. When tea was poured up, a cup would be left over. The score calculation after dinner was also different from normal.

Everyday life wasn't as engaging as always. Koutarou felt that was lonely. That's why he found himself staring at the first tatami when entering the inner room. Couldn't Kiriha just flip that over and appear from below. That was what Koutarou hazily thought.

"Satomi-sa~n."

That was when Yurika appeared in Koutarou's eyes. Having just gotten out of the bath and having changed into her pajamas, she held squatted down, holding her knees and looked into Koutarou's eyes.

"Are you thinking about Kiriha-san again?"

Yurika had a small smile and warmth and gentleness in her eyes, something she rarely showed. She was worried about Koutarou's low spirits.

"Something like that. I feel like seeing her face you know."

Koutarou honestly admitted and smiled wryly. Koutarou's and Yurika's relationship had changed quite a bit, and when it was just the two of them it wasn't rare to hear them talking about serious topics like this.

"You don't have to worry, she'll come back soon. The problems were safely resolved after all."

Yurika gently smiled and slightly tilted her head.

"I'm not worried about that. It's just that I want to see her face."

"That will happen soon too. Kiriha-san must want to see Satomi-san and everyone as well."

Koutarou and Yurika were currently alone. Yurika felt like it was her job to cheer Koutarou up as she showed a cheerful expression.

"Yurika…"

"She might already be on her way here. So—"

And just as Yurika mustered her courage and tried to approach Koutarou.

"Kyaaaaaaaaaa!?"

The tatami underneath her shot up and sent her flying.

"Gyafu!?"

Yurika continued rolling until she rolled into a corner of the room and stopped moving. Koutarou had been surprised by the suddenness of it all and all he could do was quietly watch the situation develop.

"…I did it again, huh…"

However, when he heard that voice he hurriedly looked back towards the tatami.

"Hey, Koutarou."

There, he saw the face of the girl he wanted to see.

"…"

"What?"

Since Koutarou remained silent, Kiriha tilted her head in confusion. As she did, the accessories she was wearing lightly rubbed against each other and produced a sound similar to that of a bell.

"I was just thinking this is nostalgic. When you first came here it was like this too, remember?"

Koutarou had been quiet because he had been surprised that Kiriha had appeared when he was thinking about how he wanted to see her. However, being embarrassed he was unable to honestly say so and spoke what he felt second to that.

"You're right…"

"Yurika still has terrible luck too."

Partly to hide his embarrassment, Koutarou walked over to the fainted Yurika and lifted her up. He then carried her to her bed in the wardrobe.

"Back then… I needed to be annoying so I didn't bother checking if there was someone above or not."

"And this time?"

After pulling a blanket over Yurika, he closed the sliding door to the wardrobe. Since she didn't seem to be hurt, she would probably wake up like usual tomorrow.

"I seem to be feeling nervous, so I didn't think of checking."

"Nervous…? Wait, why? You're not coming in?"

Koutarou turned back towards Kiriha and for some reason only her upper body was sticking out from the hole leading underground.

"You don't mind me intruding?"

"You ask that now? …What's the matter, really?"

"I told you, I'm feeling nervous."

Koutarou had returned to normal after seeing Kiriha's face, but oppositely, Kiriha was getting even more nervous. Her stiff expression easily showed that.

"It's rare to see you be so nervous… anyways, come on in."

"Thank you, Koutarou."

Kiriha finally entered room 106 and she returned the tatami to its former place in an accustomed manner before turning back towards Koutarou.

"Huh?"

That was where Koutarou finally noticed that Kiriha's outfit was completely different from normal.

The overall atmosphere was similar to the shrine maiden outfit she normally wore. The outfit was mostly white, but had red and gold threads used in abundance, it seemed simple yet at the same time elegant and luxurious. These clothes were quite obviously not everyday wear.

Moreover, as Kiriha stepped into the light Koutarou could see that she was wearing make-up that matched her clothes. This too was simple but it brought out her beauty.

On top of that, Kiriha was wearing golden gleaming accessories over her body. Since she normally wore accessories she didn't give off the impression of wearing more of them, but they had clearly been exchanged for higher quality accessories.

No matter how you looked at it, her outfit and accessories were not cheap. Even Koutarou who had no real knowledge of this kind of thing could tell that each piece she was wearing had an extraordinary price. Yet at the same time, her overall appearance was simple and clean.

"That's an unusual outfit. Isn't that the first time you wear it?"

"Fufu, this is a keepsake from my mother."

Kiriha put her hand on her chest and smiled proudly.

"Your mom's…"

Koutarou knew of Kiriha's family circumstances. Having lost his own mother, he understood the special feelings put into those clothes.

"Yes. This is the traditional outfit that we, the People of the Earth, wear when getting married."

"So that's a wedding dress?"

Koutarou's eyes opened wide. He vaguely understood that it was a special outfit, but he hadn't expected it to be a wedding dress.

"Kiriha-san, are you going to get married?"

"No, I'm not."

"Yeah, I haven't heard anything about that after all. Then why are you wearing that? It would be terrible if it got dirty, right?"

Kiriha had no reason for wearing a wedding dress. Then there had to be a special reason. Wearing her mother's keepsake for fun wasn't in Kiriha's character.

"I came here to invade."

"Invade… this room?"

"No, I don't need this room anymore. The reason to invade this room has been lost."

"Oh yeah, you're right."

Kiriha invading room 106 had been a measure to keep the radical faction from rebelling. With the problems regarding the radical faction resolved, Kiriha no longer had any reason to invade room 106. Yet Kiriha said she was here to invade. Koutarou didn't understand what was going on.

"So what are you going to invade."

"About that, there is something I need to talk to you about."

Kiriha moved up to straight in front of Koutarou, sat down formally and straightened her back. Her expression was stiffer than ever before. Seeing that, Koutarou understood that Kiriha was serious.

"What now, all of a sudden?"

In that situation Koutarou couldn't be standing up so he too sat down formally, facing Kiriha. After confirming that Koutarou had sat down she placed her hands slightly in front of her knees and deeply lowered her head.

"Satomi Koutarou-sama, I wish to request something of you."

Her overly formal words and serious voice, her mother's keepsake and her lowered head. Seeing all that, Koutarou understood that Kiriha was about to ask something special.

"Kiriha-san?"

But just what could it be that required her to go so far. Slight unease swelled up in Koutarou's chest. He began worrying that she might say that she was going to return underground.

"Please allow me to invade your life."

However, Kiriha said something that greatly deviated from Koutarou's imagination.

"W-What…?"

His unease and everything else just vanished from his mind. It was as if Koutarou had no understanding of what Kiriha was saying whatsoever.

"If you don't permit it, then I won't appear in your presence ever again. That is the resolution I made before coming before you."

Kiriha's Invasion

Having finished everything she had to say, Kiriha kept her hands on the tatami, raised her head and stared into Koutarou's eyes. Kiriha had come here looking for Koutarou's answer to these words. And since the answer might not be what she hoped, she had been feeling anxious from the very beginning. That's why Kiriha now paid attention to every word Koutarou spoke and every action he took. Her everything relied on this moment.

"T-That's…"

At first Koutarou had been nothing but confused, but as he peered into her eyes he gradually understood her intentions. What she meant by invasion, and why she had chosen to use that word. Having understood those circumstances, Koutarou couldn't help but find it funny.

"…Geez…"

Having reached his limit, Koutarou began smiling. While he was impressed by the strength and depth of the feelings she directed towards him, he was also amazed by her meticulousness. This wasn't a request, but a terribly clever and roundabout threat.

"Kiriha-san, you really understand me well."

Koutarou smiled wryly as he dropped his shoulders.

What Kiriha wanted hadn't changed a bit since eleven years ago. It was to marry with Koutarou, forever supporting each other. That's why she had visited Koutarou wearing a wedding dress.

But if she had said those words directly, Koutarou could refuse. It was still too early for that, and the problems with Theia and Yurika hadn't been resolved yet. That's' why Koutarou would have refused in the present situation.

That's why Kiriha hadn't used the words 'Let me marry you,' but 'Let me invade your life.' She was attempting to blur her intentions while trying to create a reason to forever remain by Koutarou's side. It was difficult for Koutarou to refuse this request because she was threatening to never see him again if he did. He would feel lonely if he couldn't meet her again. So would the other invading girls. In that situation, there was no way Koutarou could reply with 'No.'

"You've said many things to me up until now… but this is the cruelest."

"The time I have waited over ten years for is right in front of me. I have no intentions of letting that chance slip by. Even if I have to use underhanded means…"

"And that's… why you'll invade."

"Yes. I will invade your life. At any costs…"

If Koutarou accepted Kiriha's request, it would mean allowing her to always be near him no matter what life he chooses. That was practically the same as marrying Kiriha. Her request was either a clever threat made through the use of human relationships, or it was very transparent and pure means of invading created through bonds and love.

"…You've taken the political implications into consideration right?"

"Of course. I have no intentions of forcibly staying by your side to the point that it becomes a problem for you."

"So everything is thoroughly thought out, geez…"

Kiriha had no intentions of forcing their relationship. To her it was important that Koutarou allowed for her to be by his side. You could say she was similar to Maki and the band of knights in that she wanted a place to call her own.

"…Okay, I get it. I lose. Invade to your hearts content…"

There, Koutarou gave up. He couldn't refuse, and truth be told, he didn't want to refuse either. Just not being able to see Kiriha for a week was lonely. But he was too mortified and embarrassed to admit it to her face. It couldn't be helped that his words became a bit more blunt.

"Thank you very much. I will invade with heartfelt sincerity."

Kiriha smiled while large tears rolled down her cheeks. The eleven years she had spent since their first meeting had finally been rewarded. The person Kiriha loved needed her. To her, there was nothing more happy than this. And so her tears continued falling without end in sight. To the point where she could no longer even see Koutarou's face.

"Oh yeah, I forgot. Here."

Koutarou pulled something out of his pocket and put it in Kiriha's hand.

"…This is…"

Though Kiriha couldn't see from her tears, she could tell what it was by touch alone. It was a rare Kabutonga card with her name written on it. The treasure she had gotten from Koutarou eleven years ago.

After Daiha had been taken hostage, Kiriha had returned the card to Koutarou, prepared for her own death. Koutarou safely cared for it and now returned it back to Kiriha.

"…Uhhh, this… this… I… uhhhh…"

Upon obtaining the card, Kiriha started crying even more than before, sobbing like a child.

"H-Hey, why are you crying so much?"

Koutarou had given Kiriha the card to stop her from crying. Yet the result was the opposite. Instead of stopping her, he fanned the flames.

"You don't get it… uhh… Onii-chan, y-you don't, get, anything."

Kiriha's Invasion

"Eh?"

"If you give me this… right, now… uhh, then I'll, then I'll definitely… uuuuaaaaaa!"

From that point on, Kiriha couldn't form any words. An intense, endless love overflowed from her heart. However, since those emotions turned into cries as they reached her throat she couldn't properly convey them to her beloved.

"Uaaaaa, aaaaa, uwaaaaa!"

That's why Kiriha jumped at Koutarou and embraced him. That was the only way she could convey her feelings right now. A complex, delicate love whirled inside of Kiriha's chest. But Kiriha felt irritated that the only way she could convey it through the strength of her arms.

"…Even though you've gotten big, you're still like a spoiled girl."

Koutarou firmly hugged Kiriha back. Up until now, Kiriha had always been in a position that required a lot of responsibility. That's why Koutarou wanted to let Kiriha do as she pleased until her desires turned into something definitive.

Now, that I think about it…

As Koutarou spoke, Kiriha's gaze was naturally drawn to his moving mouth. And as she stared at that she remembered a promise they had made before.

"Once this is all over, I'll be satisfied as long as you give me a kiss with a smile."

"Fufu… now you've said it. Then let's hurry up and end this so I can rain kisses down upon you."

Having remembered that promise, Kiriha finally realized.

That when tears prevented you from using words, embracing wasn't the only way to convey your feelings.

Part 3

As the season turned to summer the daytime temperature exceeded 30 degrees. That said, this was Kitsushouharukaze city. Once the sun set the temperature dropped and became a lot more manageable. But there is always an exception to things.

"…I-It's hot…"

As Koutarou muttered his face fell down onto the tea table. His forehead was covered in sweat. Even at night the temperature in room 106 didn't drop. The reason for that was the too high population density. In the small room there were ten people and the body heat they exuded added up. It is said that the body heat was the equivalent of about 100 watt. So with ten people that was 1000 watt. Power equivalent to a large-scale home appliance was heating up the room.

"Stop being so stubborn and have Maki cast a spell."

"I'll make it cheap."

"…When it comes to magic, there's nothing wrong with not using it."

Many apart from Koutarou had means of managing the heat. The Forthorthe group used personal air conditioners that they could wear. Harumi's PAF also had this function. Shizuka could head out into space if she so pleased, so the summer heat was nothing. Maki used her own spells to cool her body, and Sanae had her use the same spell on her.

The only ones without means were Koutarou and Kiriha. Koutarou was just being stubborn, but Kiriha had been born quite resistant to heat. That's why Koutarou seemed to feel hot, while Kiriha was herself. Neither of them were cooling themselves, but their appearances contrasted.

"If you're too stubborn you'll end up like Yurika."

Sanae pointed to a corner of the room as she spoke. Yurika had refrained from casting magic on herself as that would constitute as private use of magic. As a result, she lost to the heat inside the wardrobe and her eyes rolled back.

"It's fine. People shouldn't try to take the easy way out anyways."

Koutarou was actually avoiding to have magic cast on him because of Yurika. He didn't want her to be the only one enduring it. But since his pride was involved he didn't want to admit it. He would simply have to endure.

"Fufu…"

Kiriha who wasn't using any cooling either smiled at Koutarou. That smile was incredibly gentle. Ever since the battle with the radical faction, Kiriha had been showing expressions fit for a girl of her age more often. While there was seemingly no difference on the surface, the expressions she showed those close to her had become more uninhibited. None of the girls of room 106 pointed that out, but they all welcomed it as a good thing.

"Then Koutarou, how about this?"

Kiriha pulled out a paper folded four times from her pocket and unfolded it in front of Koutarou. On it was a blue sky and sea coupled with white sand and a shining sun. It was a pamphlet from a travel agency in the mall.

"You wouldn't mind if we went out to play at the beach right?"

A three day, two nights travel plan was recorded on the pamphlet. Play at the beach during the day, have a luxurious dinner in the evening and finally enjoy the hot spring in the hotel at night. That was indeed an attractive proposition. However, Koutarou also had his worries.

"But, it's not like we won the lottery, so it'll cost money right?"

"Don't be so cheap. You still have all of the salary I've paid you."

"But that's—"

"What are you saving it up for? Knowing you, you probably won't use it for anything."

Koutarou still hadn't spent a single yen from the salary he had received from Theia. He held back from using it as it was money that had come from his relationship to Theia.

"Okay, I get it. It's definitely better to use it so that everyone can have fun than to save it up for no reason."

Koutarou soon made up his mind. He believed Theia was absolutely right.

I only need to use it like this in the future too. I guess I was overthinking it…

Using his salary for Theia and the others close to him wasn't a bad way to use it. If anything it was an ideal usage.

"Alright! The beach! Yurika, Yurika, we're going to the beach!"

"Zzz… Zzz…"

"Yurika-chan is still sleeping Ho-"

"She's such a sleepyhead Ho-"

"Zzz… Zzz…"

"Geez, she's so carefree, even though we have to go buy new swimsuits!"

The first one to let out a cheer of joy was Sanae. Last year she had been a ghost and a sickly girl, so she had the strongest desire to swim of all.

"Harumi, the beach. Do you swim?"

"I swim, but… I don't know if my stamina will last."

"Don't worry. You can use PAF in water too. That said, I haven't tried any experiments of it being used in water, so please let me take some data."

"Yes, by all means!"

Clan and Harumi were going to run experiments on the beach. Their relationship so far had greatly improved on Clan's invention, and once they headed for the beach it would surely improve even more.

"The beach…"

Maki on the hand had a puzzled expression. Having caught onto that change in expression, Ruth and Theia called out to her.

"Maki-san, is this your first time going to the beach?"

"Yes… the idea has never occurred to me before this."

"I see, you were born in a magical country weren't you."

Maki was born in the slums of Folsaria, and having been battling for her entire time, the idea of going to the beach had never occurred to her.

"Then this is a good opportunity. Satomi-kun is that kind of person so he often goes to the beach. So you can't be a great vassal if you don't go too, right?"

"You're right. I'll give it my best!"

"Good, that's the way. He's an idiot, so I can rest easy if I know you're with him."

"Do your best to carry out your duty, Maki-san."

However, thanks to Shizuka's follow up, the atmosphere around Maki brightened up. Using the expression, Koutarou's vassal, Maki suddenly got a lot more cheerful. They were magical words that would help whenever she got depressed.

So this really was the right answer…

Koutarou satisfyingly looked on as the girls erupted into discussions about the beach. There, Kiriha who was sitting next to him pulled on the sleeve of his t-shirt.

"Koutarou, what kind of swimsuit do you think I should wear?"

"Why are you asking me?"

"There's no reason. I just want you to decide. Do you not want to?"

"T-That's not it, but…"

"You don't have to decide right away. Just tell me what kind of design you'd like."

"Yeah…"

Thus it was decided that Koutarou and the others would go to the beach. They had gone the year before as well, but their numbers and their atmosphere was completely different this time around. They were noisy but seemingly endlessly cheerful. But there was no one that stopped to think about that change. Because everyone knew that it was more fun causing an uproar with everyone than to think about that.

Afterword

Long time no see, it's the author, Takehaya.

This time I've been able to safely deliver volume 16. This time I'd like to talk about the anime for Rokujouma no Shinryakusha!? once more. But since I have a very limited afterword this time around I will make it quick.

This half year has been very busy with the anime related stuff, but as we approach the start of the broadcast I've gotten more time. This is an obvious development as the work I need to do as we get closer to the broadcast date is less. I am both grateful and sad for this. As this volume goes on sale the anime won't have gone on air yet. But depending on when you read this book, the anime might have already started. Anyways, like everyone else I am also eagerly awaiting the anime.

Now then, leaving the anime aside, I would like to touch a little more on this volume. In this volume the curtain finally rises for the People of the Earth's civil war. Having reached a point where neither the conservative faction nor the radical faction can agree, there is no longer any option left than to use violence to get their opinion approved. Since the conservative faction is filled with people who love peace, this situation is very painful to Kiriha and those she leads. From the point the conservative faction picked up arms they had essentially lost. Despite that, Kiriha and the others picked up arms, and as to what conclusion they reach, I would like to let you readers confirm for yourselves. To those of you have already read it, I hope you enjoyed it.

Finally, I'd like to give my usual greetings. I would like to thank the editorial department for helping with the publishing of this book and for their help with the anime, and those related as well, to Poco-san in charge of illustrations, all of the voice actors and finally to all you readers who have bought this book.

Then let us meet again in the afterword of volume 17.

June, 2014 Takehaya

Corona Convention
NEW!
2010/7/10
Article 19
Mutual, peaceful and personal invasions between those who ratify the Corona Convention will be fully supported.